

What Present-Day Christians Need to Learn and Apply from the Puritans - Part 2

Saturday, Oct 29, 2022 08:00 AM CT • 54:00

Host: David Wheaton 00:08

What Present Day Christians Need to Learn and Apply from the Puritans.

Today is part two of that topic right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. The Christian Worldview is a nonprofit listener supported radio ministry. We are able to broadcast on the radio station, website or app in which you're listening today, because of the support of listeners like you, so thank you.

It's sad that the legacy of the Puritans is either not known or misconstrued today. They rose to prominence in the second half of the 1500s and influenced Protestant Christianity in Western Europe and the forming of America more than any other people or movement.

The Puritans were born again Christians who applied scripture to every area of life. Some of them sought to "purify" the compromising Church of England. Others, as in the case of the Pilgrims, a more independent branch of the Puritans, sailed to the new world to establish their own colony. And just as a point of correction, I misstated last week that the Pilgrims came to America in 1519, when it was actually 100 years later in 1620.

There is much that present-day Christians need to learn and apply from the convictions and lives of the Puritans. Joel Beeke, president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and founder of Reformation Heritage Books, the largest publisher of Puritan resources, joins us on The Christian Worldview for part two of our discussion on the Puritans.

We will again be offering the DVD documentary film, PURITAN: All of Life to the Glory of God. With Reformation Day approaching on October 31 and Thanksgiving in November, this two hour film would be excellent to show to your family or church. We'll tell you how you can order a copy today.

We are going to start with a soundbite from the film by Steve Lawson and Kevin DeYoung, talking about how the Puritans pursued sanctification, being set apart for holiness, how they were intent on that, and then Joel Beeke will join us for the interview.

Sound bite: Puritan documentary 02:28

The pursuit of personal holiness was at the head of the list for the Puritans because they believed that their conformity to Christ likeness brought glory to God.

Sound bite: Puritan documentary 02:40

Now, did they emphasize holiness in a way that many people in our day are afraid to emphasize holiness? Now, that is certainly true. I sometimes think our definition of legalism is, anyone who takes holiness more seriously than I do. Well, the Puritans are certainly going to fit the bill there.

Host: David Wheaton 02:58

Joel, it wasn't about living one way on Sunday or professing certain Creed's, but living a different way during the week. Sanctification, being set apart, useful for the Lord's service. A pursuit of holiness was a top priority for the Puritans. And I think this is where you mentioned at the beginning, where people can resent them in a way. They're too legalistic. There's no fun involved. They didn't do recreation. But the film actually points this out that they weren't like that. They actually enjoyed hunting and fishing and other recreational pursuits. But they had them in the correct priority in life. That wasn't their primary pursuit. Their life wasn't lived to recreate or to amuse themselves. So talk about this pursuit of personal holiness by the Puritans and what that might look like for Christians in America today, considering we live in a society where there's so much recreational pursuit going on all the time.

Guest: Joel Beeke 03:57

So first of all, the average Puritan life was probably 50/51 years old. Life was very short. Half of their children died before they got to adulthood. There was heavy afflictions. And to them life was very serious, and we had to be prepared to meet God. And so they believed that one eye should always be on eternity, and that the goal of life is to prepare yourself to meet God and the righteousness and peace of Jesus Christ.

Now, once you really believe that, really believe what the Bible says about living in the fear of God and to the glory of God is the purpose of life, you see then holiness automatically becomes very important, especially when the Bible says, Be holy, as I am holy. And in I Peter one and again in Hebrews 12, I believe, Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. So for them, to be holy is to be Christlike, to be Godlike, to operate out of the fear of God, the childlike fear of God, not the slavish fear, the childlike fear of God. And in the Puritan mind what that meant was to value the smiles of God more than the smiles of men, and to value the frowns of God more than the frowns of men. So your goal in life was to please God. So you did everything in life purposefully. Even your recreation was to enable you to be restored, rejuvenated, so that you could serve God better.

And so recreation, yes, they did that. But it had to be wholesome recreation not sinful. In the Puritan mind to sit in front of a TV, movie, where for two hours, and we can call them legalistic for saying this, but for two hours, you hear 25 lies, you see seven murders, you see all kinds of sexual innuendos, you'll see somebody getting divorced and remarried without biblical grounds and it's kind of made to be a romantic thing rather than an ungodly, sinful thing, just to watch that, in the Puritan mind would be impossible.

A Puritan would say to himself, I cannot participate in listening to this, because then I'm participating in these sins. We might say, Oh, come on, live a life a little bit. Oh, the Puritans would say, yes, I want to live life. I want to live life for the purpose it's lived. I want to be truly pious. Today, someone says to you, wait a minute, you are a so pious, and it's a put down. You say to a Puritan, you're so pious, he'd probably hang his head and say, Oh, would to God it would be so. I just wish I were genuinely much more pious than I am. Because piety is simply the Old Testament word fear of God, and the New Testament word God likeness. And so for the Puritan mind you see, all of life from the moment we're born again, is a pursuit of holiness. So holiness is a very good thing. Holiness produces happiness, genuine happiness from within. A Christian, who doesn't pursue holiness, the Puritans would say, is no Christian.

Host: David Wheaton 07:07

That is so interesting. And another thing from the Puritans which, oh, that we had more of today, this pursuit of holiness and piety in our life and that holiness brings happiness. It is so true when we follow God with our whole hearts we are way more joyful than we think we will be when we follow our own flesh and do what we want to do. Joel Beeke with us today here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. Joe, here's another soundbite from the film where Al Mohler talks about how the Puritans founded Harvard, but how quickly it departed from Puritan values.

Sound bite: Puritan documentary 07:45

The reason Harvard College was established was to make sure that an Orthodox Christian ministry would be perpetuated in what they called the New England in the new world. Sadly, very shortly thereafter, in a frighteningly short amount of time, Harvard lost its orthodoxy and heterodoxy began to move in. First in the form of an incipient theological liberalism. And already by the next generation, by 1701, you have very concerned people in New England and Puritans again, largely in order to replace Harvard with a more orthodox college formed what they called the Collegiate School, which later became Yale college, later Yale University. But in both cases, it was Puritan love of learning, but not love of learning abstracted just as a, as an academic discipline, but love of learning, first of all, to make certain that the word of God was rightly preached.

Host: David Wheaton 08:43

Why is the departure, Joel, from sound doctrine? It happened so quick at Harvard and other Ivy League schools. Why is that so common? And how can that be avoided? Organizations start well, but then quickly, seem to fall away from that.

Guest: Joel Beeke 09:02

I'm very concerned about this question, because I'm president of a seminary, and I have a legacy to worry about here. And I don't want to see this seminary follow suit of so many other, well probably 95% of seminaries in America. I think a couple of things need to be said here. Number one, we need to remember that this intense spiritual movement called Puritanism, the wonder is not that Puritanism came to an end around 1710. The wonder is that it lasted for 150 years. What other movement in church history that was so intensely spiritual, and so concerned about God's glory lasted for such a long period of time?

Now, why did it end? Well, sovereignly we can say the Holy Spirit wonderfully sustained this movement for about 150 years. But if the Spirit is not the innovator of such a movement, it will die out because man's nature is depraved. Second, reason, of course, is that the leading Puritans were so persecuted, so many of them were jailed in the late 17th century that when religious liberty finally came about in 1689, most of the Puritan leaders were either dead or they were languishing in prison.

So the Puritan movement missed that godly leadership and kind of died a slow death over the next couple of decades. And of course, thirdly, it didn't help that the winds of enlightenment were blowing throughout Europe, manmade exultation of human reason, and also in New England. So that was problematic. But there's a fourth reason as well. In many of the seminaries and colleges established, the board behind them, stopped looking for very godly professors and instructors, and began to look more for academic people, only. The Puritan model, which was the Reformation model, was academics plus piety, both being equally important. So the Puritans would not hire a professor that was not very godly. A man who was just very brilliant academically, but didn't have the godliness would not get the job.

And so what history has revealed over the centuries, and I studied this in some depth for myself, is that when the board of trustees in an institution like Harvard, would be consisting of sound reform, conservative, godly, well educated ministers and elders, rather than just wealthy people who are going to give a lot of money, but when the leadership really is grounded in the church, then there's a much greater chance, humanly speaking, that that institution will not degenerate so quickly at least. But of course, if the entire denomination or denominations that are behind that school like Harvard, or Yale or Princeton, if they go liberal, then of course, the school is going to go liberal. So I think the key here is to beseech the Holy Spirit to continue

working, and to hire godly professors, and to let the Board of Trustees be ruled by a truly Bible believing church.

Host: David Wheaton 12:22

I think that's well answered. If you think about it, the church has a character, God established a character qualification for leadership, nothing to do with business acumen, or how successful or donor capability and so forth. And when you get into these parachurch organizations like a college or a nonprofit ministry, where there's not the same prerequisite for leadership, the character prerequisite that the local church has, and then you bring on people who don't have or who aren't sound in doctrine are just bound to fail. So appreciate your explanation of that. Joel Beeke with us today here on The Christian Worldview. Let's get into the issue of creeds and confessions and their importance for a church. Here's Sinclair Ferguson and Kevin DeYoung, talking about this issue.

Sound bite: Puritan documentary 13:10

The reason we have creeds and confessions is because we want to say, we believe in Scripture, and this is what Scripture teaches.

It's a way to tell to others, here's what I believe. It's a way to say to people in your church, I love that I get to tell people, Look, this is what you're going to hear from the pulpit. We, in our age, are always dealing in vagaries and ambiguities and we don't press in, we don't press in like these divines did to be precise with our words, to define our terms, to be careful in how we're wording things.

Host: David Wheaton 13:46

Now, a lot of people today, Joel, think about creeds and confessions that that's something of the past. Why is that important? It's not straight from the Bible, so to speak. You're not quoting scripture, but there's summaries of what some of the most important teaching doctrines of Scripture. So talk about the benefit of having creeds and confessions, and maybe in some way can there be detriments to focusing too much on creeds and confessions?

Guest: Joel Beeke 14:14

In the Reformed/Puritan minded faith you have three purposes, I think. The first is to instruct. The second is to evangelize. So you instruct your people, your own people, through catechisms and confessions. And the content, that would be the Heidelberg Catechism in the Presbyterian tradition. In the Puritan tradition, it would largely be the shorter catechism, instructing the whole congregation. Then you also have to evangelize. So what you do is you use the catechisms and the confessions to spread those to others and say this is what we believe is a summary of what the Word of God is teaching.

And that's key because you can say, I believe in the Bible and I can say, I believe in the Bible, but we can believe very different things. So what do you really believe the Bible is saying? So you can go to your neighbor and say, here's a summary of what we think are the main truths of the Bible. And then third is you want to defend, defend the truths. And so you'll find polemical questions in catechisms and confessions, in that continental tradition, the evangelizing document with the Belgic Confession of Faith which was written to reach out to others, especially to the King of France. And the Synod of Dort, wrote the Canons of Dort, later became called the Five Points of Calvinism to defend these truths against error. So, short answer, catechisms, confessions help us to instruct ourselves, help us to evangelize other people and help us defend the truth against errors.

Now, the dangers of these things are, of course, if you put confessions or catechisms on par with scripture, even though they are a summaries of scripture. So in the authority structure, if you will, you've got scripture, then you've got authoritative standards underneath scripture subject to Scripture. And then you've got church leaders in their various writings.

Host: David Wheaton 16:18

That was very helpful, Joel. Thank you for that. Joel Beeke with us today here on The Christian Worldview. We'll take a short break and come back. We have much more coming up.

Featured Resource: Puritan DVD 16:27

In the meantime, we are offering this DVD documentary film Puritan: All of Life to the Glory of God for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview for a limited time. This is a two hour film with lots of substance.

It features preachers and scholars such as Al Mohler, John MacArthur, John Piper, Sinclair Ferguson, Steven Lawson, Steven Nichols, and many more. Just get in contact with us the usual ways at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org or by calling us toll free 1-888-646-2233 or by writing to us at Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. You are listening to The Christian Worldview. Much more coming up. I'm David Wheaton.

Fall Clearance Sale 17:13

It's that time of year for our fall clearance sale, where you will receive deep discounts, some more than 50% off on dozens of resources in The Christian Worldview store. There are all kinds of books and DVDs for adults and children, Bibles, gospel tracts, even scripture verse greeting cards. Every item in our store has been carefully selected to be compatible with the mission of The Christian Worldview, to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The Fall Clearance Sale ends November 15. So this is a great time to select resources for you and your family, your church or small group, and for Christmas gifts. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org and click on fall clearance sale, or call us toll

free at 1-888-646- 2233 for recommendations and order by phone. Again, that's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org.

Featured Resource: New Life in Christ 18:15

The momentum from the world is like a tsunami that's flooding our entire country. And the only way to change it is for people to be born again, is for there to be a great awakening in our country again and for people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And that will never happen until there is first conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment, for people to repent and to turn from their sins and to turn to God and embrace his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was Dr. Steven Lawson. His book, *New Life in Christ What Really Happens When You're Born Again And Why It Matters* is available for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. Regular retail is \$16.99. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Host: David Wheaton 19:21

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website TheChristianWorldview.org where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Today is part two of our topic, What present day Christians need to learn and apply from the Puritans and our guest is Joel Beeke. He's the host of the Puritan documentary film we are discussing. Joel, you have used the word reformed. That comes from reformation the Protestant Reformation. So what does it mean for someone listening who doesn't know what it means to be reformed in their theological beliefs?

Guest: Joel Beeke 20:05

Some people think that to be reformed means is simply to believe in the so called Five Points of Calvinism, often using an acronym of TULIP- Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints. That's an important part of the Reformed faith in terms of the doctrine of salvation. But of course, there's so many other doctrines. So, I get a little upset with people that think that the Reformed faith is nothing more than five points. But the Reformed faith historically was over against Rome, was really considered a faith that stressed the word sola in Latin which means, alone.

So five alones became predominant in the Reformation. **Scripture alone** is our authority received by **grace alone**. **Faith alone** is the instrument to receive **Christ alone** for salvation, and that results in glorifying **God alone** for my salvation. So that's called, as many of your listeners will be familiar with, **Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus and Soli Deo Gloria**. So that would be a broader sweep of a description of the Reformed faith. But

I'd like to go broader than that actually. I actually wrote a book with the help of people like Sinclair Ferguson and Michael Hagan who wrote chapters in it, a book on what is the Reformed faith? It's called, *Living for God's Glory*. And I really have about 28 points of the Reformed faith in here. Reformed faith is not just, David, about Calvinism in the mind. It's also about the reformed teaching in the heart.

So we've got chapters in this book on, What's the reformed view of God exalting piety? What's the reformed view of sanctification in one's life, and of cultivating the Holy Spirit and His work in the soul? Then we look at a whole section on, What does it mean to be reformed in the church? We look at what is reformed preaching, reformed experiential application of the Word, reformed evangelism. And then finally, we look at a section called, The Reformed Reformation in Practice. We show how the Reformed faith is robust and warm and contagious, a theology for all of life. And we look at the reformed view of marriage, the reformed view of family, reformed view of work, how you work for God's glory alone, reformed view of politics, reformed view of ethics, and then Sinclair Ferguson closes out the book with a reformed view of doxology, the ultimate goal of the Reformed faith, decentering God alone and to give all glory to God. So if the Reformed faith is about anything, it's actually about God, and about His glory, his incredible glory that he's worthy of in the salvation of sinners.

Host: David Wheaton 23:09

And I'm assuming when you're saying reformed, that's an alternate word for biblical because the Reformation was, after all, trying to reform what the Catholic Church had gone so unbiblical and so much human reason that the Reformed faith had tried to go biblical.

Guest: Joel Beeke 23:26

That's right. And that's taken up under the theme of Sola scriptura. So that reformed people, not out of arrogance, but out of biblical fidelity, feel that the reformed system of theology is not superimposed upon the Bible but comes out of the Bible, and is the best way of interpreting the Bible.

Host: David Wheaton 23:49

Joel Beeke with us today here on The Christian Worldview, the host of the Puritan documentary, which we are featuring last week and this week on the program. We will tell you how you can get this DVD coming up on the program.

I want to go to a sub point of what you just said about reformed. What does that mean as far as theological beliefs? And it's not just about Calvinism. But I want to ask you a question about Calvinism. That term means many different things to different people. And you give the acronym TULIP, and so forth. I want to focus just on one of the letters in that acronym, the U, the Unconditional election part of it. This is where there are often questions between those

who believe in God's sovereign unconditional election of believers versus those who believe that one is saved based on their own choice. I'll read just a paragraph off the website got questions.org who tried to describe the debate on this issue of unconditional election. The debate over unconditional election is not whether or not God elects or predestines people to salvation, but upon what basis he elects them. Is that election based on foreknowledge that those individuals will have faith in Christ? In other words, is it based on God knowing in advance who's going to receive or reject him? Or is it based upon God's sovereign choice to save those, to save them?

As the word "unconditional" implies, this view believes that God's election of people to salvation is done, "With no conditions attached, either foreseen or otherwise." God elects people to salvation by his own sovereign choice, and not because of some future action they will perform or condition they will meet. Those who come to Christ become his children by God's will, not by their will. So here's the question with that as a context, Joel. How did the Puritans and how should we understand this doctrine of God's unconditional election of those who will be saved, that He has determined who will be saved?

You know, based on many passages in Scripture, Ephesians 1:4 Just as God shows us [believers] in Him before the foundation of the world, that would be holy and blameless before him. He predestined us to adoptions as sons through Jesus Christ Himself, Romans 8:28-29. I mean it's all over the place, the unconditional election of God. Yet the same time, the Bible has passages about the call for man, for us to repent and believe in the gospel. John 3:16-Whoever believes in Him. So how would the Reformers or how would you, Joel, explain that tension of unconditional election?

Guest: Joel Beeke 26:44

The interesting thing, David, is that in the Bible, the tension is not there. It's just taken for granted that all who come unto Jesus will in no wise be cast out. And yet, no man will come unto me except the Father draw him. That's one verse in John 6. Someone put it this way, one old Puritan, he said, It's like having a gate in front of you and over the gate is written the words, "All who come unto me, I will no wise cast out", the free offer of grace. The responsibility of man is embedded, of course, in those words. And when a sinner by the grace of God actually walks through that gate, and is born again and flees to Christ, repenting of his sins and believes in Christ alone for salvation, he turns around, and he looks at the other side of the gate, and the other side of the gate says, "All that the Father hath given to me shall come to me". So that the saved sinner never never never thinks of saying, Well, I deserve a little credit, I'm saved because I did something that somebody else didn't do. So I get a little credit for my salvation. Well, maybe God gets the most of it, but I get a little part of it. No, no. When you are saved, you look back and say, Wow, this is God who did it because I never never would have chosen Him if He had not chosen me.

Now, I quibble a little bit with what you just read as a definition of Calvinism because the Puritans and Reformers would say, God doesn't only decree who will be saved, but he also decrees the means by which they will be saved, mainly through the preaching of the Word, but also through other means as well. And so it's our responsibility to use the means of grace. If you want to get wet, you go stand out in the rain, and you look to God for help, and you stand under the rain of the Spirit coming down upon you. And you pray for grace to respond by the Spirit's gracious influences in you, and come in repentance and in faith.

So it's not like God is some capricious robot in heaven saying, Oh, you I pick, you I don't. No, He works it all out in time. And you see, this is critical for us. Because man is depraved. Romans 3 is reality, this is who we are. So if our salvation depends upon us, well, we're all lost forever. So salvation is not of Him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy. So God alone can save us. We're too depraved of a sinner to ever choose God. We would only worship ourselves. We're self centered. This is our depravity. So election is not an obstacle for a sinner. Election is a friend of sinners. If there were no election, no one would ever be saved. That's the point the Reformers and Puritans make.

But God is in the business of saving sinners. He saves a multitude no man can number. His proneness is to choose, to elect, to see like, to rejoice in those who he saves. He gets supreme glory from saving sinners. So sinners are invited to come to Him just as they are. But yes, the Bible says that no one seeks after God, no one will come to Him in their own strength. Now, we do come by faith, we do come by repentance, but even those things, if they are called conditions of salvation, they are the gift of God. God's grace working in us, Ephesians 2 says. So, all of these texts on God's sovereignty, man's responsibility in the Bible, even though we can't fully fathom the relationship, but they come together naturally in the Scriptures without tension, so that God gets all the glory for salvation. And we are grateful recipients and praise him for 100% of our salvation. And that in turn gives us the assurance because everything that is salvific comes unto us from God.

We may have assurance in God's character, in God's promises, in God's covenant, in God's faithfulness, in God's immutability, that whom He saves, He truly saves all the way to the end. As soon as you put a human equation into our salvation, and say man gets the credit for believing, and God just foresaw which people would believe and which people would not believe, you see, then salvation depends a bit on man. And as soon as it depends upon man, well, why can't you lose it? Well of course, you can lose it. So there's no assurance. And because we are depraved, that makes the lack of assurance, all the more serious, because, well, maybe tomorrow morning, I'll wake up and I'll just feel distant from God, and well, am I really saved? So the Reformed faith, grounded in God's fatherly sovereign choice, and his drawing us through the means of the gospel to Himself, it's just reassuring on every side. And so we rest in this wonderful, electing God, who chooses us to life eternal. So no one will ever

go to hell because God, so called didn't elect him. We go to hell because we've rejected God. And we've pushed him away with all his offers of grace to us all our lifelong. And no one will ever go to heaven because he deserves to be there, but because God wonderfully chose and drew him. So all the credit for being saved goes to God, and all the blame for being lost goes to us.

Host: David Wheaton 32:32

So no one can end up in hell some day or stand before God someday in judgment and say, Well, God, you just didn't elect me. I didn't have a chance. Is that what you're saying?

Guest: Joel Beeke 32:43

That's correct. Once we stand before go on the Day of Judgment, the Bible says, Those who go to hell will not be able to answer one out of 1000 questions God asked them. And so every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. Every one will have a never dying worm in their conscience, which is the worm of memory, and see all their guilt, and realize that going to hell is entirely their own fault. So there's no one that's going to go to hell and say, you know, I don't deserve to be here. But no one goes to heaven saying, I deserve to be here. It's all God's grace. To Him be the glory. Soli Deo Gloria. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Host: David Wheaton 33:32

Well, I just so appreciate your explanation of these gritty topics that often divide Christians. Ultimately, what we all need to be after is, What does God say in His Word? And wherever our preconceived notions are, we want to say, What has God said? And accurately interpret that. So I just appreciate your explanation of those last couple of questions and I think they're very helpful. Joel Beeke is our guest today on The Christian Worldview. We're talking about the Puritan documentary and their beliefs and what we need to learn and apply from the Puritans. We need to take a short break here on The Christian Worldview.

Again, we're offering this DVD documentary film Puritan all of life to the glory of God for a donation of any amount of The Christian Worldview. Just get in contact with us the usual ways through our website, the Christian worldview.org Or by calling toll free one triple 8646 2233 or by writing to us a box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. Much more coming up on The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton.

Fall Clearance Sale 34:42

It's that time of year for our fall clearance sale, where you will receive deep discounts, some more than 50% off on dozens of resources in The Christian Worldview store. There are all kinds of books and DVDs for adults and children, Bibles, gospel tracts, even scripture verse greeting cards. Every item in our store has been carefully selected to be compatible with the

mission of The Christian Worldview, to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The Fall Clearance Sale ends November 15. So this is a great time to select resources for you and your family, your church or small group, and for Christmas gifts. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org and click on fall clearance sale, or call us toll free at 1-888-646- 2233 for recommendations and order by phone. Again, that's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org.

Featured Resource: My Boy Ben 35:41

For a limited time, we are offering My Boy, Ben for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. The book is the true story of a Yellow Lab that I had back when I was competing in the professional tennis tour. It's about relationships with Ben, my parents, with a childhood friend I would eventually marry, but ultimately with God who causes all things, even the hard things to work together for good. You can order a signed and personalized copy for yourself or for your friend who enjoys a good story, loves dogs, sports, or the outdoors and most of all needs to hear about God's grace and the Gospel. My Boy, Ben is owned by The Christian Worldview. It's 264 pages, hardcover, and retails for \$24.95. To order go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Host: David Wheaton 36:48

Thanks for joining us today on The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton, the host. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website. TheChristianWorldview.org. Transcripts and S Short Takes are also available. Our topic today is, What present day christians need to learn and apply from the Puritans. Joel Beeke is our guest. He is the president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Joel, let's discuss one of the more well known Puritans, John Bunyan, who wrote the Pilgrims Progress, the second best selling book of all time behind the Bible. He was a Puritan of the people. More of a common man. In this soundbite by Jeremy Walker from the Puritan film, it talks about how a highly educated, well known Puritan named John Owen, would want to hear John Bunyan preach.

Sound bite: Puritan documentary 37:41

Perhaps my favorite Owens story is from later on in his life. John Bunyan is coming down from Bedford to preach early in the morning, outside of London, and John Owen is going out to listen to Bunyan preach. Now Owen moves in exalted circles. And it is said that King Charles II, asked Owen, Why do you go to listen to that manual laborer chatter? And Owen is said to have replied, Your Majesty, if I could preach Christ the way that tinker preaches Christ, I would willingly relinquish all my learning.

Host: David Wheaton 38:19

So Joel, how should John Bunyan, just his life and preaching and his suffering, being in prison, how should he be a model for both preachers and just laymen today?

Guest: Joel Beeke 38:32

In terms of preaching, David, that's a great question. And I've actually written a book on the fear of God in Bunyan, where I address some of these issues of how Bunyan preached to stimulate the childlike fear of God in people. There's a few things I'd like to just say right now about his preaching that moved Owen so much, not only, but 10s of 1000s of people. And I've boiled it down. I've studied Bunyan's sermons a great deal of my life. My dad used to read Pilgrims Progress, by the way, every single Sunday night to us all 20 years I was home. He'd read about 45 minutes a night. He'd finish and we'd start over and we'd ask him questions. And so I grew up with Bunyan as like a bosom friend.

And then I read Bunyan a lot later, after I was converted as a teenager. And I think there's three things here. Bunyan had an extraordinary gift at what I call participatory preaching. That is to say he draws his hearer right into the event going on of the text. He actually often dialogues with you from the pulpit and say, Yeah, but you say this, but I say this and God says this. And, for example, he has a wonderful book, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*. The book is based on John 6:37, which quotes, "All that the Father gave to Christ, [the text I just quoted a little while ago], shall come to him." And what does he do? Well, he's so imaginative he turns the word, "shall come", into a character by that name like he does in Pilgrims Progress, Mister Shall Come. And he says, Shall Come has answered all these things. And then he raises objections of the senators who say, but I can't come for this reason or that reason or I won't come. He says, Yeah, but you shall come, Mister Shall Come. And he says, every one of you is invited, every one of you should come, and he just draws you in with his imagination into the text.

He has a book on the fig tree, *Sermons on the Fig Tree*. And he preaches the axe coming down on the tree to fell it to the ground and casts the sinner into hell and, Oh, Lord, Lord, Jesus says to His Father, spare the sinner one more year, one more year, oh, sinner, do you really want to be saved? Oh, you need to repent now. The fig tree is about to come down. And you know, he makes you feel like you're the fig tree. Participatory preaching. And then he has, secondly, a tremendous gift at what I call pleading preaching, where he beseeches the sinner to give up his own efforts and to lay down the weapons of enmity against God, to come to God just as he is and surrender to God's way of salvation. It's just amazing how he pleads with sinners to not. Sometimes he impersonates God and Christ in dialoguing with that sinner. Don't delay one more day. You know, that's Bunyans pleading, preaching. And finally, he just did a wonderful model of Christ exalting preaching, as big as he is and inviting all sinners to come to Jesus today. So big, he is exalting Jesus and all his benefits, in all his natures, in all his states,

in all his offices, and in his person. And he just exalts Christ, lifts him up to the highest and a basis man to the lowest, so that the sinner says, Wow, I need Jesus, and he's available for me.

So what the father of Puritanism, William Perkins said at the end of his book on preaching, "Preach one Christ, by Christ, to the praise of Christ". That is what Bunyan did, perhaps, perhaps better than any other Puritan I know. So I think that's what moved John Owen. He could sense this participatory preaching, this pleading, preaching, and this Christ-exalting preaching. In terms of laymen, well, I just simply say that Bunyan just preached in layman's terms. So through this same method of preaching, the common people heard him gladly, as it was said of Jesus, so they said of John Bunyan. Bunyan could resonate in common language about the gospel with the common people.

Host: David Wheaton 42:49

Wow! Thank you for explaining that. That really made John Bunyan come alive. As much as he is beloved, that his book, *Pilgrims Progress*, has made such a big impact on my life, even earlier in my life. So thank you for explaining that, Joel. Joel Beeke with us today. And I won't play the soundbite now, but John MacArthur in the film, *Puritan*, talked about the fact that Puritans were made by the persecution they suffered, whether from the monarchy from the Roman Catholic Church, from general society who thought they were just too extreme.

There is evidence now even around us in America that we are moving toward this kind of marginalization in the west. This cancel culture. People view beliefs that aren't along the lines of what the approved narratives are now, on any of the current issues of our day, you're seen as a denier. You don't follow the science. You're wild. You're out, you're out there. Speak to this, if you see this becoming more prominent in the west now where biblical Christians are going to be seen somewhat like the Puritans but how that persecution actually made them into the people they were.

Guest: Joel Beeke 44:02

If I could just enlarge on your question, just a tad. I think it's a combination of the persecution they faced. Most of them were in jail at one point or another or prison for preaching. But it's a combination of that and other forms of suffering in their lives, especially the loss of children. The average Puritan family had nine children and lost half of them by the time they reached adulthood. So the Puritans through persecution by the church and society, through all the troubles they had in child rearing, and many of the women died in childbirth, of course, God formed and molded them.

Their life expectancy, by the way, was in the 50s. And so life was very short. It was hard, but God used it to mature them. And these persecutions, these trials combined, helped the Puritans not to put their tent stakes of this world and this life too deeply into this earth's soil. So

they faced a lot of rainy days, so to speak, as one Puritan put it, describing trials. But that same Puritan said, his name was John Trap, He who rides to be crowned need not fear a few rainy days. So they learned to submit to persecution, they learned to submit to trials, the loss of children, the loss of a spouse, to God and to have their faith matured in the process. They were truly people who said, "it was good for me to have been afflicted". Now, in our society, we have our own sets of trials. But we're not very good at coping with afflictions, because we're told on all sides to worship our feelings. And you can only be happy if you don't have afflictions. The Puritans were happy with afflictions.

So we say to each other, this is interesting, "Happy New Year" and what we mean by it is, I hope, I hope you don't have many afflictions this year. I hope everything goes your way. At least that's what many people mean, even some Christians. The Puritans said to each other, "Have a blessed New Year". The word "blessed" of course means to be truly happy from within, regardless of circumstances from without. So they're saying, I hope that this year you will bow under God's sovereignty, whatever afflictions or persecutions He designs to put upon you, that you may submit to them and walk with the Lord this year and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. You see how much deeper that is.

I actually, as I'm talking to you, I just pulled out a book where one of the Scottish Puritans, it is one of my favorite quotes, he had just lost a child, he was losing his wife, his wife was dying as well from the same kind of disease, and this is what he says in his diary one day, "I've had the rod of God lain upon my family by the great distress of a dear wife on whom the Lord hath laid His hand, and on whom His hand still lies heavy. But oh, that I could proclaim the praises of His free grace, which has paid me a new and undeserved visit this day. He's been with me both in secret and public. I found the sweet smells of this rose of Sharon, and my soul was refreshed with a new sight of Him in the excellency of His person, as Emmanuel, in the sufficiency of His everlasting righteousness, by sinking hopes, with the loss of my one child, the dying of another, and the dying of my wife are revived now by the sight of Him. My bonds are loose, my burdens of affliction are made light when He appears. Here am I. Let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him. If He called me to go down to the swellings of Jordan again with my dear wife, why not be it so? If it be His holy will only be with me there Lord, and let thy rod and staff comfort me, and then I shall not fear to go through the valley of trouble, yay, through the valley of the shadow of death". Wow! We're so far from that.

Host: David Wheaton 48:01

Thank you for reading that! Oh that we would have that kind of perspective on the persecutions and sufferings that we face in our own lives. So Joel, we just so appreciate your coming on the program. And people have listened to these programs now on the Puritans. You have said a lot and a lot of different elements of them, their beliefs, their life, who they were. Just follow up with one final question. What do you want listeners to take away? What should be branded on

our minds about the Puritans as we close these two conversations that we've had on them with regards to the church, maybe our own personal walk with Christ? And then for the person listening today who wants to find out more. Do you have some recommendations of resources or books, or particular Puritans, and where they can get them for people who want to find out more about these great people who had such a big impact each other in the church and just Western civilization?

Guest: Joel Beeke 48:59

Yes, thank you so much, David. It's been great talking with you. And I do pray that these programs will do some good. To me, the greatest lesson is to focus on Jesus and fall in love with him. I mean, the Puritans were Christ lovers, Christ exalters. They could truly say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain". A second lesson, maintain biblical balance. They were people who believed 100% that God is sovereign and 100% that man is responsible. They balanced the objective and the subjective in Christianity.

And then, something I haven't said anything about, I think that is important is that they were great catechists. They catechized their children faithfully and family worship from day to day and week to week and they persevered in catechizing and so many of their children came to know the Lord when they were very, very young, and I think we've got a lot to learn there. And of course, pray without ceasing. The Puritans were prayer warriors. They spent their time on their knees for their children, their family, the church, the nation. And then we've just been talking about handling persecution and trials. We can learn from them how to handle troubles and trials Christianly. They also teach us a lot about how to rely on the Holy Spirit. To them that was critical. And maybe above all, they teach us how to live with one eye on eternity, always preparing to meet Christ in His righteousness and peace.

Now the second question you asked, the last question about about where to get this material. There are a number of publishers that are doing various Puritan books, but there's only one publisher that does both the most Puritan books of all anywhere in the world, and actually also stocks the Puritan books from all the publishers. So it's, we like to think of it as a one stop shop for anyone interested in the Puritans. So we have probably around 500 Puritan titles, and scores of books about the Puritans. And that's Reformation Heritage Books, heritagebooks.org. Go there, it will give you the largest selection in the world of Puritan literature. And by the way, we're also going to be publishing in the next seven years, 84 more Puritan titles, one per month, as well as one major set of Puritan works per year. In the last 60 years, there have been 1000 Puritan books that have been reprinted. And so Welcome to heritagebooks.org.

Host: David Wheaton 51:42

Joel, I just want to thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview and opening up a world that I think too many Christians in the West have forgotten about or have never heard of. We

just appreciate and applaud your commitment to bringing the theology and church practices and everything about the Puritans to light. And so thank you again for coming on The Christian Worldview. We just wish all of God's best and grace to you, and also your family as well.

Guest: Joel Beeke 52:11

Thank you, my brother. Thank you so much.

Host: David Wheaton 52:14

That's all we have time for today. Thank you for joining us on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. In just a moment, there'll be information on how you can hear a replay of today's program, order transcripts and resources, including this Puritan DVD for a donation of any amount to this nonprofit radio ministry. Our information to order will come immediately following the program.

Be encouraged. We may live in a challenging world, but the beliefs of the Puritans are so relevant for us today, because Jesus Christ and His Word are the same yesterday, and today and forever. So until next time, like the Puritans, "Think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm!"

Host: David Wheaton 52:59

The mission of The Christian Worldview is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript or find out, "What must I do to be saved?" Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call toll free 1-888-646-2233. The Christian Worldview is a listener supported nonprofit radio ministry furnished by the Overcomer Foundation. To make a donation, become a Christian Worldview Partner, order resources, subscribe to our free newsletter or contact us, visit TheChristianWorldview.org call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. That's Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. Thanks for listening to The Christian Worldview.