

**ENCOURAGEMENT  
FOR TODAY'S  
PASTORS**



# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY'S PASTORS

*Help from the Puritans*

Joel R. Beeke  
and  
Terry Slachter



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*Encouragement for Today's Pastors*

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In memory of six wise ruling elders  
who have been great friends  
and Puritan-like sources of encouragement  
for me in my pastoral ministry:

**Bert Harskamp**  
**Gordon Deur**  
**Henry Langerak**  
**Peter Vander Jagt**  
**Peter Van Kempen**  
**Uncle Richard Westrate**

*I count it one of life's greatest honors and joys  
to have served Christ's church with these godly  
"Barnabases" (consolers or encouragers),  
who have often cheered and upheld my weary soul  
as faithful "Aarons" and "Hurs" (Exodus 17:12).*

—JRB

\* \* \*

To the congregation of  
**East Leonard Church**  
**Grand Rapids, Michigan**

who have encouraged me in ministry  
for the past ten years  
through their practical support,  
patient love,  
and persistent intercession.

—TS



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## Introduction

In the United States today, fifteen hundred pastors leave their churches each month due to conflict, burnout, or moral failure, according to ChristianityToday.com. Of the pastors serving churches, 23 percent have previously been fired or forced out of a pulpit, and 34 percent currently serve a congregation that forced its previous pastor to leave.<sup>1</sup> The problem seems to cut across all denominations. Some studies suggest that the average tenure of a pastor in a church in the United States is about three or four years.<sup>2</sup>

Another study, done by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, found that 80 percent of its pastors who left churches did so because of behavioral problems in the church. Alan and Cheryl Klaas, who investigated the problem in the Lutheran Church, began their study with the expectation of finding that the problem lay in the training of the pastors: “We wondered if students got good services, if seminaries were recruiting the right people.” However, they said in conclusion, “The fundamental finding is that people beating on each other is the main issue.”

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1. Ken Sande, “Strike the Shepherd: Losing Pastors in the Church,” *Peacemaker Ministries*, <http://www.peacemaker.net/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=aqKFLTOBIpH&b=1084263&ct=1245867#4> (accessed January 9, 2012); John C. LaRue Jr. “Forced Exits: A Too-Common Ministry Hazard,” *ChristianityToday.com* (February 14, 2009), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/cbg/more/specialreport/6y2072.html> (accessed January 9, 2012).

2. Rob Green, “Passing the Baton: A Theological and Practical Look at Pastoral Turnover,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 54.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Klaases said, 40 percent of Lutheran seminarians came from pastors' families. Today one Lutheran seminary reported that only 5 percent of its students come from pastors' families, and other seminaries said only 17 percent of their students come from pastors' families.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of pastors burning out, dropping out, or being driven out is also evident in other countries. In Australia, for example, four books were published in five years about clergy problems. The titles are telling: *The Plight of the Australian Clergy*, *High Calling, High Stress*, *Battle Guide for Christian Leaders—An Endangered Species*, and *Conflict and Decline*.<sup>4</sup>

So what is going on? Why are so many pastors leaving churches or even the ministry itself? Kevin Miller lists five typical cries of discouraged pastors:

1. "I cannot see any progress in my work."
2. "I cannot do what I'm truly gifted to do."
3. "Some difficult members are causing me pain."
4. "I don't get affirmation for what I do."
5. "I don't get enough rest and relaxation."<sup>5</sup>

### Causes of Pastoral Discouragement

Archibald Hart suggests that several factors contribute to pastoral depression and burnout. First, the ministry is a people-oriented calling to lead a group of volunteers. A pastor cannot avoid problems such as troublesome personalities, interpersonal conflicts, and resulting frustrations in meeting his goals. Second, a minister's work

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3. Alan C. Klaas and Cheryl D. Klaas, *Quiet Conversations: Concrete Help for Weary Ministry Leaders* (Kansas City, Mo.: Mission Growth Publications, 2000).

4. Norman W. H. Blaikie, *Plight of the Australian Clergy: To Convert, Care or Challenge?* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979); Robin J. Pryor, *High Calling, High Stress* (Bedford Park, S. Aust.: Uniting Church of Australia, Synod of Victoria, 1982); Cedric Taylor and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Battle Guide for Christian Leaders: An Endangered Species* (Cudgen, N.S.W.: Wellcare Publications, 1981); Kenneth Dempsey, *Conflict and Decline: Ministers and Laymen in an Australian Country Town* (North Ryde: Methuen, Australia, 1983).

5. Kevin A. Miller, *Secrets of Staying Power: Overcoming the Discouragements of Ministry* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Christianity Today, 1988), 48–49.

does not have clear boundaries. Feeling they can never complete any one task creates a lot of stress for pastors. Third, pastoral ministry lacks criteria for measuring success, yet most ministers (disclaimers aside) long to see tangible results of their work. Yet setting numerical goals in ministry is like grasping at the wind. Fourth, congregational expectations for a pastor are often unrealistically high. This not only sets up a minister for failure in meeting everyone's expectations but also tends to make him a people-pleaser.

Fifth, problems in a pastor's character, such as perfectionism, laziness, authoritarianism, or a victim mentality may exacerbate difficulties in church leadership. Sixth, many ministers come to a church with extremely idealistic anticipations. The idealism of youth combined with high spiritual aspirations can lead to grave disappointments if adjustments are not made in the first years of ministry. Seventh, many pastors feel guilty about their limitations, emotional ups and downs, and weaknesses.<sup>6</sup>

Some churches can be very hard on pastors. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) preached a funeral sermon for a young pastor who hadn't been at his church very long. Learning this was the second pastor within a short time to die while serving this congregation, Henry was moved to warn the people in the pews:

God has a controversy with you [in] this place, of this congregation, from the head of which two such eminently useful men have been removed in so short a time, in both of whom you thought you had goods laid up for many years. He has a controversy with us who are ministers: for whereby our hands are very much weakened, and our glory is waxen thin.... The putting out of our candles is a bad omen of the removal of our candlestick; it is, at least, a call to us, to remember whence we are fallen, and repent, lest it be removed.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Archibald D. Hart, *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1984), 115–25.

7. Matthew Henry, "A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Dr. Samuel Benion," in *The Complete Works of Matthew Henry* (1855; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 1:569.

Pastors must also realize that the world at large is no friend to gospel ministry. A century ago Christianity was well respected in our country. Even then, however, the world saved its broadest smiles for a nominal Christianity that did not threaten its idols or interfere with its pleasures. Today, in an increasingly secular, re-paganized, and, some say, post-Christian culture, ministers soon realize that the world's standards of success do not apply to the ministry. Pastors whose self-esteem is based upon meeting specific goals, such as increasing the number of people on membership rolls or attracting large numbers of people to worship services; garnering respect and attaining social prominence based on their position in a certain church; or peddling Christian novelties and pandering to Christian fads soon find that gospel ministry does not fulfill their ambitions. In addition, pastors who seek popularity especially among young people by being chic ("hipper than thou") and culturally accommodating will soon find that such recognition is hollow as well as fleeting. Still more tragic is the plight of those who reduce the Christian faith to a money-making racket. Matthew Henry warned ministers of his day about setting such false goals:

They who deal in secular business, think they succeed well and gain their point, if they raise an estate, and advance their families, and make to themselves a name among the great ones of the earth; they rejoice because their wealth is great, and their hand has gotten much, and say, "Soul, take thine ease." But the ministry, though it is the best calling, is the worst trade, in the world; that is, it will prove so to those who make a mere trade of it, looking no further than to get money by it, and to enrich themselves.<sup>8</sup>

### **"Hold Fast"**

There are also several factors in our current spiritual environment that drain a pastor's vital zeal for ministry. We must oppose these forces with the grace of our Lord. Hebrews 4:14 says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

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8. Matthew Henry, "A Sermon Concerning the Work and Success of the Ministry," in *Works*, 1:471.

What are these pressures? Some of us find ourselves in denominations where the standards of doctrine are being downgraded. We find ourselves in situations in which we must decide when and where to make a stand. The counsel of God's Holy Word is to hold fast to the solid truths of the Word of God. God's Word is truth, be it the written Word we know as the Bible, or the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

Some of us face opposition, perhaps from peers within our own denomination or from members in the pew who want us to join them in abandoning the historic doctrines of Reformation Christianity or to downplay the necessity to experience those doctrines in a personal and spiritual way. Brothers, we are called to "hold fast our profession" and the profession of our forefathers. A Christianity that is only a vague theory about the nature of things or a program for personal improvement and/or the amelioration of social evils is really no threat to the world or anything like "the power of God unto salvation."

Some of us are confronted with a cult of man-made traditions or a demand for trendy innovations in church life and worship. Such man-made imperatives bear down upon us, clinging to stagnation or calling for change. We are commanded to resist such ungodly demands as part of holding fast our profession of faith in the God who has commanded us to worship Him in the way appointed in His Word.

Some of us labor in situations where little growth is evident, numerical or spiritual. We are confronted with a painful lack of practical godliness and hunger for communion with God. We are confronted daily with unbelief, with apathy, with ignorance, with spiritual deadness, or with man-centered worldliness. Such signs of spiritual declension are enough to crush the soul of any servant of God and bring us to tears of sorrow and grief. Yet the call comes to us to "hold fast our profession," even in an evil day. Though we have to labor in churches in which very few members "pray their pastors full so that they may preach them full" (as some old Dutch pastors used to say), we are called to "hold fast our profession."

We are called to labor in the midst of the moral climate of a nation in which humanism is dominant, in which there is little regard for the holiness of God's name, the authority of His Word, or the demands of His law. Many are such fools as to say that there is no God

(Ps. 14:1); there is no fear of God before their eyes (Ps. 36:1), and God is not in all their thoughts (Ps. 10:4). God's kingdom does not come as we would have it. His revealed will is contradicted without shame or embarrassment, even among professing Christians. When we are discouraged and ask with Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" (Isa. 53:1), we are called to "hold fast our profession."

When these discouragements take an inward turn, we must redouble our efforts to persevere. Perhaps we are burdened with overwork. We labor under the endless demands of pastoral counseling, church administration, and sermon preparation. We may work through the week but come to the Lord's Day still feeling woefully unprepared to preach the Word and find ourselves exhausted at the end of the "day of rest." Here too we are called to "hold fast our profession." We may find our souls in agony and yearn to see broken human beings brought to faith and restored after the image of Christ. When we say with Moses that our hands grow heavy in intercession (Ex. 17:12) and confess with the apostle Paul, "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19), we are called to "hold fast our profession."

Some of us are crippled by debilitating loneliness—perhaps having no congenial or like-minded colleagues in our locality. Maybe we feel deprived of kindred spirits who share our longing for the vital, experiential reality of the doctrines of grace we proclaim. Then too we are called "to hold fast our profession." To be a minister of the gospel in our day is often to tread a lonely path. In 1989 a hundred different occupations were surveyed and rated in terms of loneliness, and the second-loneliest job on the list was that of minister of the Word. Number one was a night watchman. Doesn't that tell us something? We are performing a lonely task, as men who watch for the souls of others, but even then the call comes: "Hold fast." Our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, went alone to tread the winepress of the wrath of God on our behalf.

Some of us labor in the midst of strife and disunity within our own flocks. A minority of vocal members spreads foolish accusations and slanderous gossip that wound our fellow Christians, divide our churches, and grieve our souls. The group of critics perhaps is small

as a percentage of the congregation, but the damage they do is disproportionately large. James Sparks wrote a book about such people and the evil they do, titled *Potshots at the Preacher*.<sup>9</sup>

Isn't that what goes on many times? You feel that there are people in the church who are angling to get you. They cause you great grief. They provoke a tendency to defensiveness in you. They engender bitterness within your soul. They force you into situations sometimes where it seems whatever you say or do will land you in trouble. And again, the advice is draw near to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help you in your time of need, and hold fast your profession.

Then again, some of us are discouraged because we feel the withdrawing of the presence of God in our soul's consciousness for no apparent reason. Or perhaps after tackling important assignments or just before we have to preach under difficult circumstances, we may be assailed with temptations to doubt and distrust or by thoughts of our inadequacies and failures. When wave after wave of providential affliction breaks on our heads, even then the apostle says, "Hold fast your profession."

Perhaps more than anything else, some of us are discouraged on account of our own weak spiritual condition. Deep within we know that we resist having to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ. We don't wrestle as we should against our own inward corruption. We are too comfortable with our natural self-centeredness. We tell ourselves that we deserve better treatment. In 1651, some Scottish ministers spoke for all of us when they confessed their "exceeding great selfishness in all that we do; acting from ourselves, for ourselves, and to ourselves."<sup>10</sup>

We are too unacquainted with ourselves, and so we are estranged from God. We study more to learn the right words to say than to experience spiritual realities as we should. We drink too much from human cisterns rather than draw water from the divine well. We are prone to wander from our Shepherd; we are prone to rest too little in God. Filled with ourselves, distracted by the cares of this life, or

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9. James A. Sparks, *Potshots at the Preacher* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977).

10. Horatius Bonar, *Words to the Winners of Souls* (Boston: American Tract Society, n.d.), 47.

enticed by the deceitfulness of riches, we have little hunger or thirst for the living God.

Our private lives sometimes contradict our ministerial lives; we are more holy in the pulpit than we are in private. This inconsistency wears away at our spiritual sensitivities, and deep within we are discouraged by ourselves and with ourselves. We know that we have abandoned the simplicity of faith. We have abandoned the godly concern we ought to have for the welfare of our flock, for the glory of the name of God. When the tide of unbelief sweeps in, we begin to excuse our unbelief more as an affliction to be pitied than a crime to be condemned and a sin to be repented of. We turn our unbelief into an excuse for self-indulgence, and before we know it, our ministries revolve around ourselves rather than God. We are our own greatest discouragements, our own greatest obstacles.

Under such conditions, where do servants of the Lord look for strength? Most fundamentally, you will find your strength in God's Word, "which is able to build you up," even in the midst of dissension in the church (Acts 20:32). Here in the Word we hear our Great High Priest speaking the words of eternal life (Heb. 4:14–16). Grace has been poured into His lips (Ps. 45:2). At the same time, His arrows are sharp when aimed at the target of the sins that live in our hearts (Ps. 45:5).

Here in Christ we find the intercessor who is fully competent to meet our every need. As William Symington observed, Christ is a skillful intercessor who knows God and us perfectly and thus can plead for us in accordance with both God's law and our needs. His intercession is marked by moral purity and absolute righteousness, pleasing in every way to the Judge of all the earth. Christ is a compassionate intercessor, "able to enter into their feelings, and to make their case his own." His intercession is prompt and timely, obtaining grace just at the point in the crisis when we most need it. He is an earnest intercessor, who presents His petitions for us with warmth and fervor. Christ intercedes with authority, as once licensed and authorized by God to obtain mercy for His own. He is unique as the Mediator who alone atones for sin and obtains all the graces of the covenant. Christ is a prevailing intercessor whose Father always hears Him. And He is a constant intercessor who never ceases to watch over us with His full



energy.<sup>11</sup> Jesus Christ, who is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8), will be your anchor when you begin to slip away, your friend when you have to stand alone, and your helper when your situation appears helpless. Therefore, go to the throne of grace.

The Scriptures advise us to learn from examples of faithful ministers (Heb. 13:7). The Puritans of seventeenth-century Britain are a body of such ministers, whose teaching and living can be particularly encouraging to troubled and discouraged pastors today. They were steadfast in adhering to Scripture as the Word of God, in confessing the great truths of the Reformed faith, and in applying sound doctrine to the problems of life in an age and culture with many parallels to our own.

### Why the Puritans?

Some may object to using the Puritans as models, saying, “Those pastors didn’t have to deal with the demanding people of today! They knew nothing about constantly being on call in a 24/7 culture. They had no Internet, iPods, or cell phones to interrupt their sermon preparation, family time, or private devotions.” Others argue that the Puritans were negative killjoys who found sin in everything and everyone, constantly harping on the depravity of man. Still others will insist that people today wouldn’t tolerate listening to hour-long Puritan sermons or endure a series on a book of the Bible that took years to complete.

Perhaps an abbreviated course on “Puritanism 101” is needed before we move on. *Puritan* was originally a pejorative term. It was used to compare conscientious Christians who sought to bring all of life under the Word of God to the heretical, ascetic medieval sect known as the *Cathari* (“pure ones”). In other words, the term was meant as an accusation that these Christians were too zealous for purity and too precise in their religion. It also implied they were fanatical and could never have fun. *Puritan* was first used in Britain in the 1560s for people who sought to press the reformation of the church’s doctrine, worship, and government farther than Queen

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11. William Symington, *On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 284–96.

Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, deemed necessary. The name stuck and came to denote a host of faithful ministers and lay-people who, in the face of opposition and persecution, stood for the Christianity of the Bible for many generations. Though caricatures of the Puritans persist today, in reality they were humble Christians who loved Christ and sought to glorify God by obeying His Word in all areas of life: personal, domestic, social, vocational, ecclesiastical, and national.

Puritanism continued under the reigns of James I (1603–1625) and Charles I (1625–1649). The Puritans rose to power in the era of the Commonwealth and Protectorate (1649–1660) and persisted during the reigns of Charles II (1660–1685), James II (1685–1688), and William of Orange (1688–1702). They suffered persecution, however, particularly under Charles I and Charles II, who arrested, imprisoned, fined, maimed, hanged, or exiled them for their convictions. Persecution under Charles I motivated many Puritans to colonize New England. Charles II ejected two thousand Puritan ministers from the Church of England for refusing to submit to the Act of Uniformity (1662). Later writers such as Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) were Puritan at heart but are not usually included by scholars in the historical Puritan movement of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It should also be noted that the Puritans had many like-minded brethren in other countries, such as Scotland and the Netherlands.

Though it is difficult to define Puritanism, we may outline its main traits and emphases. In 1628 Scottish historian David Calderwood (1575–1650) described Puritanism as a movement characterized by (1) opposition to unbiblical hierarchy in the authority structures of the church; (2) advocacy of the Reformed doctrines of God's sovereign grace; (3) refusal to conform to any requirement in worship not commanded in Scripture; (4) the cherishing of personal, experiential religion of the heart and not merely outward religiosity; and (5) separation from popular sins with an insistence on walking according to God's laws in every area of life.<sup>12</sup>

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12. David Calderwood, *The Pastor and the Prelate* (1628; repr., Philadelphia: Samuel Agnew, 1844), 64.

In 1646 Englishman John Geree (c. 1601–1649) described the ideal “Old English Puritan” as a person who “honored God above all, and under God gave every one his due.” He believed Scripture alone should direct worship. He devoted himself to prayer in private, in family worship, and in public worship. The ideal Puritan valued reading Scripture in private and public, but he also esteemed the preaching of the Word as one of God’s most powerful instruments. Specifically, he recommended preaching that avoided “vain flourishes of wit” while plainly and clearly declaring the contents of Scripture and applying them to people’s consciences. He set apart the Lord’s Day for rest, worship, and private devotion. He cherished baptism and the Lord’s Supper but rejected any notion that they automatically conveyed grace. He said religion called us to obedience in every sphere: “The best Christians should be the best husbands, best wives, best parents, best children, best magistrates, best subjects, that the doctrine of God might be adorned, not blasphemed.”<sup>13</sup>

Doctrinally, Puritanism embraced a broad, vigorous, and confessional Reformed orthodoxy; experientially, it was warm and devoted to communion with God; ecclesiastically, it was committed to honoring the Scriptures alone as God’s rule for the faith and life of the church; politically, it honored earthly rulers but was bound in conscience to honor God above the king; evangelistically, it was aggressive yet tender in presenting the free offer of the gospel and calling sinners to Christ; pastorally, it fostered the pursuit of practical holiness and spiritual growth.

Puritan pastors faced many trials, including opposition, persecution, imprisonment, expulsion from their congregations, financial hardships, physical harm, and even death. They also had to deal with other ills of life in the seventeenth century, such as these:

1. A very high mortality rate. Estimates vary, but between a quarter and a third of English children died before reaching puberty. Many adults did not live past their thirties, and people in their late

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13. John Geree, “Character of an Old English Puritane,” in *Images of English Puritanism: A Collection of Contemporary Sources 1589–1646*, ed. Lawrence A. Sasek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 207–12.

fifties and early sixties were said to have reached “old age” (though some people did live into their eighties and beyond).<sup>14</sup>

2. Self-imposed exile in Europe, especially the Netherlands, which meant departing in haste, traveling in disguise, and dealing with the stresses of relocating to a foreign culture.

3. Transatlantic travel to New England, where they faced the hardships of pioneering, including famine, disease, and attacks from the French, Spanish, and Native Americans.

4. Political upheaval and civil war in England (1642–1651), as well as wars between England, Scotland, and Ireland.

5. Sickness and death from the plague in London and other population centers that swept thousands of people into eternity almost overnight.

6. The horrors of the Great Fire of London in early September 1666, which destroyed thirteen thousand homes and eighty-seven church buildings and was so hot that it melted iron bars.

7. The surge of religious sects in the mid-seventeenth century promoting all kinds of strange new teachings, reviving old heresies, and militating against the true faith.

8. Growing lack of respect for the Word of God and the office of minister. This was especially true in New England as society became more secularized, pluralistic, and skeptical of orthodoxy and institutional religion.<sup>15</sup>

9. A profound awareness of the spiritual battles that pastors face when dealing with the pressures of the world, the temptations of the flesh, and the assaults of the devil. John Flavel (1628–1691) wrote these sobering words about a pastor's calling and work:

The labours of the ministry will exhaust the very marrow from your bones, hasten old age and death. They are fitly compared to the toil of men in harvest, to the labours of a woman in travail, and to the agonies of soldiers in the extremity of a battle. We must watch when others sleep. And indeed it is not so much

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14. For a collation of statistics, see Marsha Urban, *Seventeenth-Century Mother's Advice Books* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 10–11.

15. Allen Carden, *Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 113.

the expense of our labours, as the loss of them, that kills us. It is not with us, as with other labourers: They find their work as they leave it, so do not we. Sin and Satan unravel almost all we do, the impressions we make on our people's souls in one sermon, vanish before the next. . . . Yea, we must fight in defense of the truths we preach, as well as study them to paleness, and preach them unto faintness: but well-spent head, lungs, and all; welcome pained breasts, aching backs, and trembling legs; if we can by all but approve ourselves Christ's faithful servants, and hear that joyful voice from his mouth, "Well done, good and faithful servants."<sup>16</sup>

It should be acknowledged that a few Puritans fell into extremes, giving credence to the unattractive caricature that has attached itself to the movement as a whole. Here as elsewhere, the reader is urged to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). The goal is adaptation, not imitation. It is not necessary to imitate Puritans in order to profit from their faith, their example, and their writings.

It also must be remembered that in their own day, the Puritans suffered many setbacks and defeats and failed to achieve some of their most important aims with regard to the reformation of the Church of England. Despite difficulties, discouragements, and apparent defeat, the Puritans had an enormous impact on the spiritual life of the English-speaking world. This impact was seen and felt well into the nineteenth century, when J. C. Ryle wrote, "The Puritans, as a body, have done more to elevate the national character than any class of Englishmen that ever lived."<sup>17</sup> Nor is anyone prepared to deny that traces of the influence of the Puritans in Britain, the Netherlands, and North America persist to this day.

The diligent study of the Scriptures strengthened Puritan pastors in the seventeenth century and enabled them to keep going in ministry, even in the worst of times. God encouraged them so they might encourage others (2 Cor. 1:4). Reading the Puritans has

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16. John Flavel, "The Character of a True Evangelical Pastor," in *The Works of John Flavel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968), 6:568–69.

17. J. C. Ryle, introduction to *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* (London: James Nisbet, 1871), 2:xi.

encouraged us immensely. It is our conviction that the Puritans have much to say to pastors today. Though this book is intended to strengthen the mind, it aims primarily at ways in which the Puritans can strengthen the heart.<sup>18</sup>

May our God and Father use this book to strengthen pastors by His Spirit so that Christ will dwell in their hearts through faith, fill them with the fullness of God's glorious love, and equip them for every good work, in the pursuit of their calling.

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18. For a treatment of Puritan teachings on most major doctrines of systematic theology, see Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).