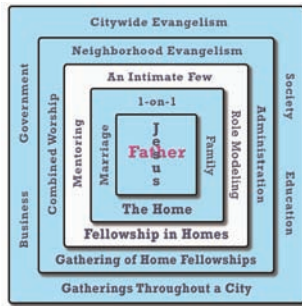


Preparing Home Fellowship Families for the Dark Days of Chastisement

Lesson 3

Topic 1. The Covenant Understanding of the Pilgrims and Puritans



“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings” (Isaiah 58:12)

Topic 1.

The Covenant Understanding of the Pilgrims and Puritans.

Most of the early European settlers journeyed to this land seeking freedom from religious oppression. Granted, others who settled here were seeking material gain, but for the most part recognized the wisdom of the biblical boundaries by which the Puritans lived.

When the Reformation ultimately resulted in the Bible being translated into the language of the common people, it was as if the gates of spiritual freedom flung open. As they understood the unchanging truth within the Bible millions sought a relationship with God apart from dependence on religious hierarchy or ritual form. The ecclesiastical authorities didn't take this affront to their power easily. They martyred countless thousands in order to maintain their control. That persecution forced those who sought to be true to our Lord to flee, leaving behind homes, homeland and any earthly security for the sake of living in freedom with Christ.

As He did with the Israelites, God continues to use oppression to turn His rebellious people back to Him, *and/or* to test their love and resolve to live in Covenant union

with Him and obey His commands. Anyone can “believe” in God when everything is going well for them. But when suffering comes, such as with Job of old, or in the dark days of chastisement to come, you discover just how much you trust in your Covenant union in Christ, in your Father's sovereignty over all that happens, and in your willingness to keep the terms of His Covenant of love with you.

A tragic scheme of Satan has declared the Older Testament dead and buried, irrelevant for “New Testament” believers. Yet the obedient trust of the Pilgrims and Puritans was built on their belief in the continuity of the entire Bible. After all, within *both* testaments is revealed the Person and ways of the same God Who doesn't change. For example, in His covenant with the Israelites our Father offered them a love-based relationship that required their obedience to the terms of His commands (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). And, in the New Covenant made possible through the shed blood of Jesus, He presents terms to us for keeping it:

“If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love” (John 15:10).

“This is love for God: to obey His com-

mands. And His commands are not burdensome” (1John 5:3).

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love” (2John 1:6).

Keep in mind that the only Scripture known to the writers of the gospels and letters was the Older Testament. The people of Jesus’ time had no doubt about the interwoven connection between *love for God* and *keeping His commands as a way of life* because of that love.

Since then, sadly, manmade doctrines have separated *love* and *obedience as an expression of that love* into polar opposites. Countless numbers of Christians have been deceived into thinking they’re actually displeasing God by obeying His commands and desiring to please Him! How demonic is that?!! Yet today, since the Bible is often taught like an academic textbook, people confine it to the “knowledge” part of their brain. That’s one reason it’s so difficult for them to *put into practice* day by day its unchanging truth as a way of life. And because there’s little or no personal interaction between the teacher and the listeners, there’s no personal accountability or encouragement to obey Scripture’s timeless commands.

The Pilgrims and Puritans had a better view of their communal responsibility of keeping the terms of God’s Covenant. Their interpersonal discussions with each other often contained the ways they had put His commands into action—both as families and as a community. To our detriment, Christians today don’t have such helpful conversations of applying God’s commands together.

The Pilgrims and Puritans had arrived here having experienced only the tyranny of monarchies. Yet because these

faithful were devoted to God and His Word they established a representative form of government and were able to create a far more moral society than those which they’d fled. The time is coming when our Father will chastise this nation for its blatant sin and disregard for moral living. But when the chastisement is complete both this government and society will need to be rebuilt on the same God-given priorities as those exercised by the Pilgrims and Puritans.

Time and again we see in His Word that like any loving father, our heavenly Father chastises those He loves when they need it, then He restores them. As an example in the Older Testament, He sent Ezra back to Jerusalem to *restore* His commands as a way of life for His people (Ezra 7:10). Alongside the prophet God sent Nehemiah to *rebuild* the walls of fallen Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:3, 2:17). Leaders in the pattern of these men will soon be needed again!

The Pilgrims and Puritans understood from His Word that God sees a nation not only in terms of the current people who inhabit it but also by their ancestry and the choices they made in generations past. Because of their insight into the Older Testament these early settlers knew that God kept accounts: the choices made by one generation DO affect generations to come:

*“I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the **third and fourth generation of those who hate Me**, but showing love to **a thousand [generations] of those who love Me** and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5,6).*

Unlike the fractionalized families of today, the Puritans and Pilgrims understood the *generational* perspective. The choice they made to leave England out of

their devotion to their Lord was not only on behalf of themselves but also so their children could receive His blessing.

To make sure this purpose was more likely to succeed, they chose wise and devout men to lead them—men who would willingly lay their own lives down for their faith and their devotion to those with them. Throughout the Older Testament God had shown to these first settlers the punishment that befell an entire people when their leaders grievously sinned (see 2Samuel 24; 2Kings 24:3). So they wisely chose godly, humble men to lead them—men who exemplified the character of Jesus and established their own lives on the Word of God.

Because the Bible was now available in their own language, heads of households and their families could read God's Word for themselves. They began to understand the personal responsibilities they and their families had to their God and to each other—a sense of personal ownership of covenant relationship and responsibilities and privileges which the religious hierarchy had hidden from them. Men understood they were responsible for the spiritual development of their wives and children. And like their Hebraic ancestors in the faith, they saw their *home* as the *basic building block for spiritual development*.

When people began to read the Bible for themselves they realized that they weren't "born into membership" into the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England. From the Scriptures they understood that one must intentionally seek and experience a spiritual rebirth in order to be a child of God (1Peter 1:3).

Again the Older Testament provided the foundation for the intensity and purposefulness with which God wanted these men and women to fulfill their

Proverbial Wisdom

We need to understand the covenant relationship with our Lord as the Pilgrims did because we will truly *need* the blessings He brings as we love Him and obey His commands. Almost all the Newer Testament writings cite the Older Testament; Matthew does this 55 times. From the pages of the Older Testament we learn how to relate to our Lord Jesus in obedient trust, a trust empowered by the indwelling Spirit to live uprightly in our Father's sight:

"Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scripture [Hebrew text] has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who trusted in Him were later to receive" (John 7:38,39).

The *nature* of the trust in Jesus that leads to salvation is first found in the Older Testament! Only by trusting in Jesus with the kind of trust the Hebrew Scriptures made clear can a person receive the Holy Spirit. Don't overlook this important point! By cutting off the Older Testament, Christianity today has become an alien man-centered religion lacking the spiritual power the first followers of Jesus experienced. Too many of those who claim to belong to Him have no evidence of the living water His Spirit would produce. Yet, you'll *need* this power to endure the days of oppression that are coming!

family responsibilities. The covenant of marriage and the straight path along which children needed to be daily guided mirrored the covenant union and spiritual reproduction of life in Christ:

"Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth" (Malachi 2:15).

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **These commandments** that I give you today are to be **upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them** when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands [so that you'll be mindful of them in whatever you do] and bind them on your foreheads [so you'll be mindful of them in whatever you think]. Write them on the **doorframes of your houses** [so that whatever occurs within your home is righteous] and on **your gates** [so that you keep His ways whenever you leave your home]" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

This foundation of the daily responsibility of fathers to model loving God in raising children who learned to know and obey Him prodded men in Ephesus to follow through: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, **bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord**" (Ephesians 6:4).

The Puritans have wrongly been accused of prudeness and cold love. Yet unlike the ecclesiastical teaching of the Roman Catholic and Anglican hierarchy that marital sex was an evil to be practiced only for reproductive purposes, Puritans viewed intimacy as the finest expression of love given by God within the marriage covenant: "**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her**" (Ephesians 5:25; see also Proverbs 5:18,19; 12:4; 18:22; Hebrews 13:4).

The Puritans took their family responsibilities seriously. The Bible, and mutual discussion of how to put its commands and ways into practice, was a normal part of societal life. When the established religion of England with its focus on services and ritual was exposed as unbiblical, people began to

The Building Blocks Upon Which God Once Blessed This Nation

5. Society Serving the Interests of God

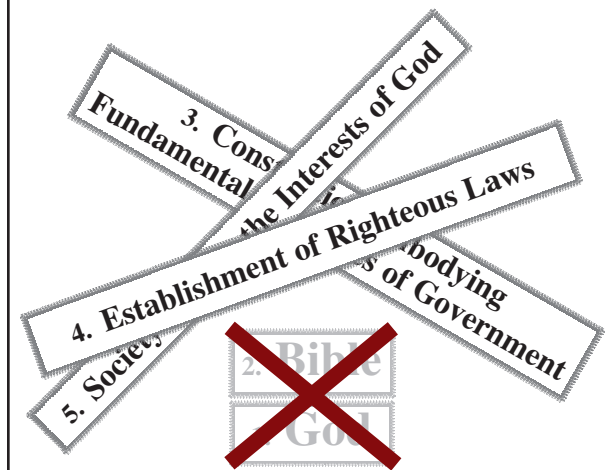
4. Establishment of Righteous Laws

3. Constitution Embodying Fundamental Principles of Government

2. Bible

1. God

As God and His Word have been extinguished in this nation, everything else is toppling!



see their daily lives in the context of service to our Lord to bring Him glory. The ways in which the Word of God got applied to family life, fellowship, business, the legal system, and government became part of the natural dialogue of those who loved God and wanted to obey the terms of His Covenant.

"Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.' 'Yes, we will come to you, for You are the LORD our God'" (Jeremiah 3:22).

As we have tried to impress on you, our Pilgrim and Puritan forefathers understood clearly the importance of the

Older Testament as well as the Newer, and had no doubt about the continuity of both testaments as one God-breathed presentation. If your faith is to endure our Father's forthcoming chastisement of this nation so you can be among His *rebuffers* and *restorers*, you will need the same loving reliance on His Spirit in you and the same wholehearted devotion in applying all of His commands to your life as they did.

It will be crucial for you as an individual, for your family, and for your extended spiritual family that individually and collectively you see yourselves as His vessels from whom flow streams of living water. Your faith can't be confined to a system of belief in your mind. Rather, it must be recognizable by others as a daily way of life, the life of Jesus within you.

The faith of the Pilgrims and Puritans was a living responsiveness of obedient trust which was enacted in their motives and conduct. As emphasized by James, Paul and other writers, good deeds were *the outflow* of an authentic love for their Lord and for one another:

"[Jesus] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14).

"This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone" (Titus 3:8);

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

The Puritans came to this land to freely put their faith into practice unhindered by the political maneuvering of the monarchy and the religious establishment. They were determined to bring the Gospel to the native inhabitants, a message of God News in which the teachings of Jesus were translated into daily way of life (Matthew 7:21-27). Their "biblical literacy" was seen by how they chose to live in a way that brought honor and praise to God.

We encourage you to take a closer look at the history of the Pilgrims and Puritans. Their impact on the Founding Fathers of this nation and the blessings God bestowed because of that influence must be understood if you are to rebuild and restore through His Spirit according to His Word. Some common threads run through all who love our Lord Jesus and would be true to Him:

- How truly sovereign our Father is over everything.
- How important it is to have a focus on eternity, and to lovingly and purposefully reach the lost around you.
- How willing you are to share in the sufferings of Jesus so that you might share in His glory.

1. **If you're a parent, what kind of intergenerational view of your family do you have? Are you deeply burdened that succeeding generations will be welcomed in heaven?**
2. **What are your family discussions like? Do you consider various aspects of your life such as your relationships, TV watching, use of discretionary time, and discern how God's Word applies to these choices?**
3. **Would our Lord Jesus commend you because your faith is seen in your daily actions? Ask your family and friends whether your appraisal is accurate.**

To further explore the Pilgrims and Puritans and their effect on the Founding Fathers, we suggest the documentary DVD *Monumental* and/or the book *Forged By Faith* by Rod Gragg.