

## The Cloud of Witnesses

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” – Titus 2:11-14

## The Puritans



*Richard Baxter*



*John Bunyan*

- The Puritans were a group of Reformed Christians in England who wanted to purify the existing Church of England. Their movement ultimately ended up forming several separate, “nonconformist” churches (including the Baptists) in opposition to the Anglicans. As a result, they suffered much persecution. Some groups, known as Separatists, emigrated to Holland; others remained in England; still others founded the Puritan colony of Massachusetts Bay.

- Richard Baxter (1615-1691) was one of the leading Puritan pastors in England. He reformed the practice of ministry in and around his parish of Kidderminster. His most famous book, *The Reformed Pastor*, describes this process. He gained tremendous influence during the English Civil War but largely failed to bring unity among the divided Christians of England. He spent much of his career suffering intermittent persecution and imprisonment.

- John Bunyan (1628-1688) was a member of the Puritan nonconformist movement that would come to be known as “Baptists.” As a young man, he was tortured by an uneasy conscience and became convinced of his wretchedness as a sinner. It was this feeling of spiritual desperation that led him to a group of Baptists led by the pastor John Gifford. Bunyan took over the pastorate from Gifford, and became famous as a pastor and writer. He is the author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, one of the most widely-published books in history, and several other important works, including his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.



### Quotes from Baxter and other Puritans

“It is the most high and noble part of holiness to search after, behold, admire, and love the great Creator in all his works.”

“I preached as never sure to preach again, as a dying man to dying men.”

“Men would sooner believe that the gospel is from heaven if they saw more such effects of it upon the hearts and lives of those who profess it. The world is better able to read the nature of religion in a man’s life than in the Bible.”

“There are no virtues wherein your example will do more, at least to abate men’s prejudice, than humility and meekness and self-denial.”

“Unity in things necessary; liberty in things unnecessary; and charity in all.”

“One leak will sink a ship: and one sin will destroy a sinner.” – John Bunyan

“In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without heart.” – John Bunyan

“Heart-work is hard work indeed. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and careless spirit, will cost no great difficulties; but to set yourself before the Lord, and to tie up your loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon him: this will cost you something.” – John Flavel

### Facts about the Puritans

- A Puritan church service usually lasted 3 hours —an hour for prayer and two hours for a sermon. In Massachusetts Bay Colony, those who failed to attend church were subjected to some form of public discipline, like being put in the stocks.

- The King James Bible, though it later became beloved, was originally composed, at least in part, as an *anti-Baptist* Bible (Baptists, and some other Puritans of the time, preferred the Geneva Bible).

- The Puritan colony at Massachusetts Bay was one of the most highly-educated, literate societies in the world. Within a few years of its establishment, they founded Harvard College.

- The early Puritans in Massachusetts, in contrast to many other settlers, wanted to evangelize and do good to the Native Americans. They considered their colony a “city on a hill,” an experiment in holiness which the whole world was watching.

### Pilgrim’s Progress

- This book is a classic work of Protestant devotion, describing in allegory the journey of a Christian from a sinful state all the way, ultimately, to heaven. It has been translated into more than 200 languages and remains popular to this day. In evangelical Christianity, it is the second most influential book after only the Bible itself.



*Christian seeks for a way of escape outside the City of Destruction.*