

# **A Puritan Theology**

## STUDY GUIDE



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Reformation Heritage Books  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

*Puritan Theology Study Guide*

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**Reformation Heritage Books**

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246

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www.heritagebooks.org

*Printed in the United States of America*

16 17 18 19 20 21/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-60178-518-3

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## Preface

Reading is one thing; reading well is another thing entirely. Reading well involves retention, understanding, and the ability to weigh the arguments and information. If you are going to invest the time and effort of reading a large book like *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, then there is no point in dabbling. Hence, we offer a study guide for individuals and groups who desire to think deeply on these crucial subjects.

This study guide of *A Puritan Theology*, if used well, will require considerable work by the reader. But where there is great effort there will usually be great benefit. We venture to say that answering the questions in this booklet will make one not only a good theologian, but also a good historical theologian.

*A Puritan Theology* aims to present you with a basic Puritan systematic theology that addresses more than fifty areas of teaching sound doctrine where the Puritans excel. It also includes eight chapters on specific areas in which the Puritans brought their theology to bear on practical, daily life.

Since each chapter of our book stands on its own, it goes without saying that not all of the questions need to be answered, just as all of the chapters in the book do not need to be read. Readers can begin from the front and read through to the end. Or they can decide on a section (*loci*) in the book and work away at Puritan Soteriology, for example. Or, if they have difficulty reading theology, they could read the last section first on “Theology in Practice,” and then have their appetite whetted to go back to the beginning and work their way through the book. There’s lots of freedom here.

But whatever you do, prayerfully approach your studies, and use this time to learn. To students of theology, keep in mind the following advice from the Prince of the Puritans, John Owen: “Wherever fear and caution have not infused the student’s heart, God is despised. His pleasure is only to dwell in hearts which tremble at His Word. Light or frivolous perusal of the Scriptures is a sickness of soul which leads on to the death of atheism.”

Moreover, according to Owen, it is imperative, for the good of the student, “that he carefully weigh up and monitor what progress he is making: (1) in all of the truth which he is busy digging out of the Word, and (2) in acceptable worship of God.

Let the latter be the first and main purpose of all his studies and meditations in the Holy Scriptures.... Our studies are useless if they do not teach us about our own standing before God and our Lord Jesus.”

Lastly, all of our study should be “preceded, accompanied, and closed by continuous and heart-felt prayer. This is the most effectual means ordained of God for discovering that heavenly wisdom for which we are seeking.”

Many thanks to Michael Dewalt and Paul Smalley for their assistance on this guide. We trust this guide, the book, and the advice of Owen above will help readers of *A Puritan Theology* to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Savior, Jesus Christ.

—Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones

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# Chapter 1



1. According to Stephen Charnock, how can fallen man know God without Christ? What ten attributes of God does Charnock assert to be recognizable to non-believers by the light of nature?
2. According to John Owen, what is the threefold meaning of *the word of God*, and what does each Greek term mean?
3. According to Owen, what makes Scripture divine and infallible? How did God reveal Himself to the writers of Scripture so that we have the very Word of God today?



4. Why was the doctrine of covenant theology crucial for understanding supernatural theology in Puritan thought?

5. What is the source of all supernatural theology? How does this source reveal God not only to men but to angels as well?

6. Explain Thomas Goodwin's position on Adam's natural theology, or knowledge of God, before the fall.

## Chapter 2



1. Explain the similarities and differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace as identified by Patrick Gillespie in his *The Ark of the Testament Opened*.
2. How did the Puritans view Christ as the major principle of interpretation?
3. What is the *sensus literalis*, and how is this principle foundational for biblical interpretation?

4. What is the difference between typology and allegory when it comes to interpreting the Old Testament?

5. What are the roles of logical consequence and reason in interpreting Scripture?

6. Explain the difference between the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) and the analogy of Scripture (*analogia Scripturae*).