



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on August 29th 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.**

We are again meeting at Bethesda Chapel. However, as not everyone as yet feels able to join us in person, we still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast recordings of the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

We continue our series looking at Psalms, and our worship today is led by **Alec**.

**After watching and listening to Tim play "All I once held dear," as people arrived, Alec welcomes us all, wherever we are.** He shares that there was a service in the chapel yesterday - his eldest nephew's wedding was on the screen. The wedding itself was held in Southampton, but thanks to technology and Jonathan W, Alec was able to be a part of the ceremony. Alec was alone in the building yesterday, but is pleased not to be alone today, and read words from 1 Corinthians 13 which were part of the wedding service he was able to watch:

"Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered: (our theme today is anger), it keeps no record of wrong. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth; it always protects, it always trusts, it always hopes and it always perseveres. Love never fails."

**Alec invites those who wish,** to stand for our first hymn,, which Tim plays on the piano and Esther leads in singing:

### **Immortal, invisible, God only wise**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, the great and the small;  
T all life Thou livest, the True Life of all;

we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish, but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory; pure Father of light;  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render: O help us to see  
'tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

**PUBLIC DOMAIN**

Words: Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908) Music: ST. DENIO. Anon. Welsh hymn melody  
CCL no 5664

**Hywel leads us in our prayers of intercession.**

"Oh God our Father, we give you thanks that today you are calling us to worship you and to learn more of you. You know the needs with which we come into your house. Grant that here we may find comfort in sorrow and soothing for hearts that are sore. Grant that here we may find guidance for problems and light for minds that are perplexed. Grant that here we may find the strength for our temptations and grace to overcome the fascination with wrong things. Grant that here we may meet Jesus and go out, not to forget him anymore.

We remember those who cannot be in church with us today. Those who are ill: we remember Brian and Beryl and David and Melody. Those who are aged. Those who are too sad to come - we think particularly of Gwen. Those who have the care of children and family things. Those who must work even today. Those who listen to radio services or watch the recording of this service. Those who must care for invalids. Grant that in their homes, in hospitals, in infirmaries, hospices and nursing homes or as they journey, all such people may know the unseen fellowship of the worshipping company of those who love you.

We thank you Oh God our Father for all you have done for us in this past week. Grant that your word we hear today will not return to you void and empty but it will accomplish that for which you sent it. Grant that tomorrow we may go back to our work with bodies that are rested, with minds that are enlightened, and hearts more devoted to your love. Grant that we may go back to the ordinary activities of the world to see all life in the light of eternity and to judge all things by your presence. We remember today very specially our absent friends wherever they are, bless them and keep them safe. Grant that our walk may be closer to you and that there may be a clearer light to shine upon the road that leads to you and our journeys end. All these things we ask in and through the love of Jesus Christ our Saviour Lord and Master. Amen"

**Alec shares the notices:** our meetings this week begin on Tuesday, with our open morning from 10 till 12, Thursday evening from 7.30pm when we have our prayer meeting or (this week) Bible study. He shared that last week he had an interesting conversation with some young people as he arrived, some of whom then joined the meeting. Saturday Movie morning restarted yesterday, with 6 adults, 11 children and 3 helpers present and this week we are hosting Safeguarding training following that, from 1pm.

We can now read watch or listen to our **Second hymn**: Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah (or Redeemer!!) which again was played by Tim, with Esther leading in singing.

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore;  
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,  
whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fire and cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through.  
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,  
be Thou still my Strength and Shield;  
be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death and hell's Destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side.  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to Thee;  
I will ever give to Thee.

Songwriters: John Hughes / William Williams  
Public domain  
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**We are invited to share in our** Bible reading, Psalm 69, as a Responsive reading.

1 Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

2 I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

3 I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.

4 Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.  
I am forced to restore what I did not steal.

5 You, God, know my folly; my guilt is not hidden from you.

6 Lord, the Lord Almighty, may those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me; God of Israel,  
may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me.

7 For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face.

8 I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children;

9 for zeal for your house consumes me,

and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

10 When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn;

11 when I put on sackcloth, people make sport of me.

12 Those who sit at the gate mock me, and I am the song of the drunkards.

13 But I pray to you, Lord, in the time of your favour;  
in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation.

14 Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink;

deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters.

15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit  
close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, Lord, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to  
me.

17 Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.

18 Come near and rescue me; deliver me because of my foes.

19 You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before  
you.

20 Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but  
there was none, for comforters, but I found none.

21 They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

22 May the table set before them become a snare; may it become retribution and a  
trap.

23 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.

24 Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them.

25 May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents.

26 For they persecute those you wound and talk about the pain of those you hurt.

27 Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in your salvation.

28 May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.

29 But as for me, afflicted and in pain—may your salvation, God, protect me.

30 I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.

31 This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and  
hooves.

32 The poor will see and be glad—you who seek God, may your hearts live!

33 The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.

34 Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them,

35 for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle  
there and possess it;

36 the children of his servants will inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell  
there.

**Alec invited Esther to share a Musical interlude, playing a piece on the recorder.**  
He thought this might reflect his theme of anger, but in fact it was rather more sad  
than angry! **Telemann Methodical Sonata 3, Grave.**

**Alec shares his Message, beginning with prayer: "Save me O God"**

In August we have been looking at human emotions and feelings that may be positive or  
negative as reflected in the Psalms and where we might turn to in different sorts of  
circumstances. We have looked so far at Doubt, (Psalm 73), Hope, (Psalm 16), Being

discouraged and down, (Psalms 42 and 43), and Thankfulness, (Psalm 116). Today we are going to look at anger with the help of and reference to Psalm 69 which we read together earlier.

Trying to tackle or even to approach the emotion of anger in one short message is like having a quantity of water sufficient to fill the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean or both and being expected to put it in a teacup accompanied maybe by a nice big piece of sweet cake.

Anger is our theme today and we could maybe each one of us get really het up or red-faced about this topic but we won't, at least that is not my intention.

Psalm 69 which we read earlier on is one of many so-called imprecatory, cursing or vengeance Psalms where people put a curse on somebody, denounce them or vilify them or in any case wish them anything else but well.

To put it very simply it's like saying to somebody, "Sorry to meet you; I hope God gives you a really bad day. Because that's what you deserve."

You might think this is anything other than what Christian love is about and to support your understanding you might possibly cite or quote Mt. 5:44-45 where our Lord says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven" or Luke 6:35 where he says: "Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."

But there are masses of these imprecatory Psalms full of curses on our enemies. The strongest one is probably Psalm 109 but I didn't really have the heart to choose that! Maybe I should have done! Psalm 109 cheerfully asks the Lord to ensure that our adversary's life should be short, his children wanderers and beggars and his wife a widow. 20 of the 150 Psalms in the Old Testament, (Psalms 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 79, 83, 94, 137, 139 and 143), are considered as "cursing Psalms". I give you this long list to show that we really have a problem if we don't treat this topic seriously.

Among the prophets Hosea, Micah and Jeremiah said the same sorts of things.

Deuteronomy 28:15-68 speaks clearly of curses for disobedience which I may come back to and maybe for some of us surprisingly even in the New Testament we have verses saying more or less the same for example in 1 Corinthians 16:22, Galatians 1:8-9 and 5:12, Rev. 6:10.

Why are there so many verses in the bible where believers are so angry that they ask God to curse their enemies? Is this really right?

The people of God are angry when the name of God is being misused. Because God's Name is being or has been dishonoured.

The people of God are angry when the Word of God is not being followed, not being obeyed and people are living according to their own ideas and seemingly having a better life than God-fearing believers as a consequence.

The people of God are angry when others are clearly not living their life in the power of the spirit.

When God's Name is glorified in our lives we are truly free.

When God's Word lives in our hearts and minds and is lived out in our lives then we are truly free.

When the Spirit of God lives in our hearts and His power working in our lives is visible we are seen to be truly free.

The cursing psalms are the songs of the oppressed, always prayed from a position of vulnerability and weakness, from a position of apparent helplessness, not from a dominating heart or a celebratory or triumphalist attitude.

In my personal opinion it is not an appropriate pastoral strategy for church carers or even acceptable biblical practice for those in positions of responsibility in churches to misuse the content of these Psalms for their own purposes applying them in a manner which the Lord would not have intended. Nevertheless I think each one of us experiences in our contact with these Psalms surprise at the frequent apparent harshness of some of the things written here in God's Word which of course does not detract from the truth of 2 Timothy 3:16 where we read, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness".

So what is God saying to us here about anger? What are we going to learn here? What are we going to take away in our hearts from this message this morning?

In Psalm 69 the writer begins with a cry for help, describing himself as a drowning man, one who is bogged down in a morass, as someone who is crossing a ford and suddenly swept downstream to deep pools by an unexpected rush of flood water. He is also beyond human help for no-one has heard his cries and he is getting weaker and weaker.

Why is he experiencing this disaster, this calamity, this helplessness? What are the reasons for the difficult indeed more or less impossible situation in which he finds himself?

The situation he is in is the result of the false and unfair opposition and hostility of his associates who have used their power and influence to press upon him claims which are completely unjustified. They have forced him to give up things which he is wrongfully accused of having stolen.

The Psalmist himself is not claiming to be completely blameless for no wrongs are hidden from God. Nevertheless he has sought to live an upright life and he foresees despair taking hold of other godly men who will be discouraged if his personal urgent need receives no recognition and response from God.

In verse 8 he adds the new fact of the unnatural hostility of his family and then explains why he does not understand what is going on. His main point is that he himself has shown outstanding faith in and commitment to God. Despite this or maybe because of this he is experiencing disgrace, separation, misunderstanding, tears, grief and outrage and has been ridiculed and mocked.

Why? Because in his zeal for and enthusiasm and commitment to the honour of the God of Israel and God's house he has downgraded or basically ignored all his personal interests prioritising the welfare and glory of God's Name.

All sorts of people including his brothers and the civic elders as well as unprincipled and degenerate people have laughed at him and at God.

He asks God to redeem him and set him free, to reclaim him as God's possession in order to undo the unrighteousness which is taking place, but his circumstances take a further turn for the worse when those who were expected to show compassion and comfort towards him prove to be as disappointing and suspicious as his own family. Previously he had fasted but now his enemies give him poison for food.

The floodgates are opened and from verse 22 his sense of human injustice, cruelty and dishonour leads to a denunciation of those who are mistreating him. He threatens and curses them with parallel experiences to those he has been made to experience himself, for example they had forced him to be outcast by his family so let them become homeless. They had sought to deprive him of God's blessing so may they have their names removed from the list of godly men and so on.

Whether or not we consider these curses as vindictive or not, his main concern, his prime interest, his overriding priority is for the name of God to be honoured and not dishonoured. His own interests are at best secondary.

All of a sudden, a bit like Asaph in Psalm 73, he realises the truth. He receives new insight. His eyes are opened to the reality of the Lord's knowledge, power and active intervention as we see from verse 29. "But as for me, afflicted and in pain –may your salvation, God, protect me."

You see we have come back to the beginning. Verse 1 "Save me, O God." Verse 29, "May your salvation God protect me." Despair and anger are transformed into praise.

Maybe we are all familiar with the book of Jonah?

Refer to Jonah chapters 1 to 4.

God says to Jonah, "Have you any right to be angry?"

We should not be angry when we see God's will being fulfilled in the lives of others, when men and women are coming to the Lord and are growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But you say that's fine. I understand that. But aren't there are other times when it is OK to be angry? Or do I have a churning feeling in my stomach, tightness in my chest, an increased and rapid heartbeat, my legs going weak, tense muscles, a feeling of being hot and a pounding head or other things for nothing?

When my newly replaced glass living room window has just become the target of my neighbour's soccer ball and is in little pieces on my new living room carpet and I go immediately to my neighbour who opens the door and thanks me for returning the ball that his son lost three weeks ago, I might get angry.

When I see my wife or partner with somebody else when he or she is supposed to be working late I might get angry.

When my child or grandchild is apparently regularly bullied at school and nobody cares a hoot I might get angry.

Yes of course it is OK to be angry in such circumstances providing things are as they seem. But as Paul writes to the Ephesian church, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."

Human anger is normal and not necessarily wrong. Human anger can be harmful and destructive if not expressed according to biblical guidelines. Human anger often comes out of distorted perception. But human anger can be controlled.

We shouldn't allow it to lead to vengeance or hatred, to revenge or an attitude of judgement. In the book of James the dangers of verbal abuse are clearly outlined and we are encouraged to be slow to speak and slow to anger.

I should not end talking about anger without referring to grief processes as these affect us each and every one and are very significant as we go through our lives. The losses that we experience especially of loved ones but also of career opportunities and other life goals, abilities that we used to have or wanted to develop, chances that we have lost or perceive that we have lost lead to a grieving process which may begin with shock and move through a denial phase on to anger. Through further phases we usually arrive at acceptance but anger is one very important phase in the grief process which is helpful and constructive as well as necessary in our grieving over loss. These phases are not linear and we may not experience all of them and as I said not in this order. But anger at loss is certainly



completely normal, acceptable, creative and necessary. Whatever our loss, however and whenever we are angry God is with us and will comfort us, reminding us of His presence with us and assuring us of his help, protection and support.

I will close by reading verses 1-4 and 22-24 of Psalm 71:

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me.

Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.

I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, Holy One of Israel.

My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you –I whom you have delivered.

My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.

**We are now able to listen to our second Musical interlude as Esther** plays a happier melody, **Chopin: Non Piu Mesta (No longer sad)** – Esther says perhaps it should be no longer angry!!

**Our final hymn, requested by Beryl, is Brian's favourite hymn: How great thou art.**

Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:  
'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:  
'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,  
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
when I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur  
and see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:  
Then sings my soul....

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,

that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin.  
Then sings my soul....

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation  
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;  
then I shall bow, in humble adoration  
and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul...

Songwriter: Stuart Hine

How Great Thou Art lyrics © 1949 Sony/atv Tree Publishing, Universal Music Publishing, I Am They Publishing, Manna Music Inc  
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**Alec leads us as we share the Grace together:**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship  
of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.**

The Church Members' Meeting planned for 7 September at Bethesda (at 7.30 pm) is also planned to be our Annual General Meeting, so will include some annually raised matters. The planned agenda is as follows:

- 1. Welcome and Opening Devotions**
- 2. Reports: Pastor's, Deacons', Finance**
- 3. Election of Deacons**
- 4. Annual Meeting Matters, including Reading and Affirmation of Safeguarding Statement and Annual Appointments Affirmation**
- 5. AOB**
- 6. Benediction and Closing Worship**

It would be very helpful, if you have any matters you would like to be covered under AOB, to notify us of these in advance if possible. We hope to see you there!

**(I am away next week so the service sheet will be delayed - I will send it when I return - sorry! Judith)**