



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on July 11th 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

The lifting of lockdown restrictions has resulted in the decision to meet in person at Bethesda Chapel once again. We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. 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 entitled; "Encouragement in Hard Times", and our worship today is led by **Tim, who welcomes us all, wherever we are.**

"Good morning everybody. It's lovely to see you here this morning and welcome to worship at Blackburn Baptist Church. It's great you've been able to join us this morning for the next in our series looking at 'Encouragement in hard times.' It's great that we can be encouraged together as we look at God's word and we learn more about him. It's great that we can be here this morning to do that and to sing a great hymn of praise that reminds us of God's care and guidance of us, even when we go through times of difficulty and stress.' Guide me oh thou great redeemer'. So let's come together, feel free to stand or sit, but do join in in your heart."

We begin our worship with a familiar rousing hymn, which if you are at home, you can sing with gusto! Those at Bethesda had to content themselves with perhaps humming quietly behind their masks, or singing in their hearts: (or just watching and listening to the video) Guide me O thou great redeemer.

Guide me O Thou Great Redeemer,
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 streams doth flow;
let the fiery cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey though:
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
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.

Lyrics W Williams, Music 'Cym Rhondda' J Hughes
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As Tim said, that was a rousing song!!

He then led in a short prayer:

"Thank you Lord that you are our great Redeemer. Thank you that you've made the way of salvation open to us, that we can come to you. We can ask for your forgiveness through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and Lord, that you promise that you will accept us. Bring us into your family, forgive us and cleanse us. Thank you for the great things you have done for us and continue to do for us, Lord that you are our ongoing guide through all the ups and downs of life. Thank you that as that song reminded us when we are weak then you are strong. Thank you that you have won the victory over death and hell and sin. Lord we thank you and praise you for all you have done for us and for what it means to us. As we continue in your presence this morning, guide us and help us, and may we indeed be encouraged as we learn more of you and learn more of what you have done for us and how you carry us along day by day. In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

Tim then shares a few notices, reminding us of our Zoom coffee at lunchtime today and our Zoom prayer meeting on Thursday evening. He also reminded us of the forthcoming Deacons elections, for which nominations need to be received by Sunday 22nd of August. (Tim also checked as to whether we were expecting to meet outside after the service, but not today!!!)

Tim invited one of our members who hasn't been around for a while to join him at the front - it was Esther, who is now home from university for the summer!! She shared with us some of what she has been doing and will be doing in the next academic year - as she is doing a language degree (studying French and history at Birmingham) the third year is not her final year -she'll be moving to France to teach English; and she shared some of the highlights of this last year.

Esther said that perhaps strangely she has enjoyed the last year, she has been sharing a house with some good friends and they have all enjoyed spending time together, a real blessing. Her university church, City Church Birmingham, has kept going with Zoom and Livestream and she found that a real encouragement throughout the year. They actually managed to meet recently in person, having a day away at a conference centre, and sharing fun and games together!!

She has also been involved with the Christian Union, and like many places there has been a lot of zooming going on! It's actually been a really encouraging time for the CU, they have even managed to start up a whole new 'small group' Bible study scheme, in fact Christian unions across the country have been involved, and this has meant that not only have freshers been involved but the older students too. These Impact groups have been a real highlight for Esther and she has been able to lead one of these groups, meeting up with some great freshers and keeping her friendships going with some of the older members of the CU. This has really encouraged the growth of the CU.

Many of us have missed Esther for a number of reasons, including her voice, and we were able to listen to her singing again. The service today has a focus on death and the hope of heaven, and Esther chosen this hymn, which Tim played on the piano - All is well with my soul. You may wish to sing it too, knowing it was written by Horatio Spafford, following the tragic death of his family, in a fire and an accident at sea, but still he was able to write this song, reflecting on God's love and grace.

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control:
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has shed his own blood for my soul.

It is well with my soul...

My sin oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
my sin, not in part, but the whole,
is nailed to his cross, and I bear it no more;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

It is well with my soul....

For me be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live
If Jordan above me shall roll
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
You will whisper your peace to my soul.

It is well with my soul....

Bot Lord, its for you, for your coming we wait
The sky, not the grave, is our goal,
O trump of the angel, oh, voice of the Lord,
blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul.

It is well with my soul...

(O Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend;
even so, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul;...)

Horatio Spafford, Music Philip Bliss
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Tim leads us in our prayers, asking that we join him with the response to "Lord in your mercy" - "Hear our prayers"

"Father God we come before you this morning and we want to praise you for who you are and all you have done for us. Thank you that you are our mighty creator God, the one who made everything we see around us in such perfection, and who sustains it by the words of your power. Thank you Lord that you are righteous and just. You are also loving and kind and thank you that we see in the cross of Jesus the perfect expression of those aspects of your character brought together. We thank you that you are faithful and unchanging, a promise keeping God, and Lord we pray that we might know you more and more.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayers.

Lord because of what Jesus has done, we are forgiven, but Lord we know we are still sinners and our lives do not reflect the way you want us to be. We are still a 'work in progress' Lord and we are sorry when we go our own way and we let our own human will override yours. Forgive us Lord and cleanse us and restore us to fellowship with you. Thank you is that that is possible because of what Jesus has done.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayers.

We thank you Lord that because of what Jesus has done we have no condemnation, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Thank you that we can come before you therefore into your very presence this morning without fear, and thank you for the encouragements that you give us, the encouragements of your word, the encouragements that come from being part of your family, the encouragements from your promises that take us even through hard times. Thank you that you sustain us. Thank you that you hear us when we pray and answer us according to your will.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayers.

We depend on you for everything in our lives. Help us to continue to be people who depend on you and are not tempted to rely on our own resources. We bring before you some of the things that are on our hearts this morning. We pray for our world and the ongoing fight against the coronavirus pandemic. We pray for our leaders and for

wise decisions, and we pray that nations will be able to work together and to overcome this disease through your grace.

Lord we pray for the worlds troublespots and those concerned about them. We think about the situation in Afghanistan as western troops leave that country and there are so many fears about what may follow. Lord we pray for the situation in the United States particularly those in the west that are threatened by fire situations and we pray for those who may be affected by that. We pray for those who are continuing to mourn the loss of loved ones in the building collapse in Miami. Lord we pray for your church across the world where it's not easy to follow Jesus, where following him brings persecution and sorrow and suffering. Lord we pray that you would strengthen your people wherever that is the case, that they would follow you boldly and with courage, to reach out to others with a message of how great it is to follow Jesus. We pray for ourselves too here, Lord, we pray that you would encourage us in our work here in this place as we seek to reach out with the gospel, the good news of Jesus, to all those around us. We pray for those in our fellowship who are ill or lonely or sad at this time Lord, that you would be all to them that they need.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayers.

We leave a moment now for quiet prayer individually, as you bring before the Lord those on your heart this morning

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayers.

Amen."

Keeping it in the family, Debbie reads our Bible passage for today: 2 Corinthians 5, verses 1-10

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Tim then shared his message: - here are the notes on which he based his talk.

Encouragement in Hard Times – Death and the Hope of Heaven

1. Introduction

- We've been thinking about the encouragement we can know in hard times because of our God and his character
- When we know him, we have no need to fear, we can leave our anxieties in his hands and we can trust his purposes and promises
- This is still true when we face what may seem the ultimate consequence of hard time – death
- We've all been faced starkly with the reality of death over the current times. It's a subject relevant to all of us, for obvious reasons, but one we may shy away from (Woody Allen quote: "I'm not afraid of death – I just don't want to be there when it happens!")
- Let's look at the encouragements we can know from God's word on this important subject

2. The Origin of Death

- Death is spiritual not physical/natural in origin (Romans 5¹², Romans 6²³) – a result of sin
- Death was not part of God's ideal plan (Ezekiel 18³²) – it is wrong and an enemy (1 Corinthians 15^{25,26})
- Death's effects began as Adam and Eve sinned and continue ever since (Genesis 2^{16,17}, 1 Corinthians 15^{21,22}). Sin separates – people from other people and, most importantly, it separates us from God
- There were two ways this affected Adam and Eve – as the Bible talks about two kinds of death

3. Two Types of Death, Both a Kind of Separation

- Physical death:

physical decay, leading ultimately to physical death - the separation of body and soul/spirit (James 2²⁶, Genesis 25¹⁷, Ecclesiastes 12⁷)

God could justly have ended Adam and Eve's physical lives when they sinned, but graciously delayed this

this is true for us too – our deaths are delayed as God sustains our life moment by moment (Psalm 54⁴, Genesis 2⁷, Daniel 5²³, Job 12¹⁰)

death comes inevitably to all – but not at our own choice (Daniel 5²³, 1 Samuel 2⁶) – our lives are not our own

- Spiritual death:

experienced immediately by Adam and Eve - the separation of man and God (Ephesians 4¹⁸) – they felt the need to hide and be afraid

it's the basic state of all of us because of sin (Ephesians 2¹⁻³, Colossians 2¹³)

there's nothing we can do about it on our own (Romans 5⁶, 7¹⁸⁻²³, John 15⁵)

worse, if not reversed before our physical death, it becomes a permanent state after facing judgement (Hebrews 9²⁷) – the 'second death' (Revelation 20⁶, 20¹⁴, 21⁸)

4. The Defeat of Death

- These things are the bad news, but there is the most stunning good news!
- The cross of Jesus spelled the end of the power of death – both physical and spiritual (2 Timothy 1^{9,10}, Hebrews 2¹⁴, 1 Corinthians 15⁵⁴). Because the origin of death is in sin, and sin was dealt with at the cross, so death was also dealt with
- The cross is a 'tropaion' (origin of the word 'trophy') – a symbol of triumph in battle which the Greeks would set up on a battlefield to display the arms and weapons of their conquered enemies – it was often in the form of a wooden pole with cross pieces. Jesus triumphed over the enemies of sin and death by the cross
- The resurrection proved it – death could not hold him (Acts 2²⁴)
- It had been predicted ahead of time (Psalm 68²⁰, Isaiah 25⁸)
- Jesus, the second man, did what Adam, the first man, couldn't (Romans 5¹²⁻¹⁹, 2 Corinthians 15⁴⁵⁻⁴⁹) and he now is the master of death (Revelation 11⁸)
- This makes available unending spiritual life now (John 5²⁴, John 8⁵¹, John 10²⁸) – and the promise of a renewed physical body not subject to decay (2 Corinthians 4⁷, 1 Corinthians 15^{42,43}). Romans 8^{10,11} summarises this.
- These great truths offer us great encouragement when facing our own death or those of other believers

5. Approaching Physical Death

- Death can come at any time, but for most, it's after ageing. [The Bible presents a positive view of ageing. For example: long life a blessing of God – Exodus 20¹²; the old still fruitful – Psalm 92¹²⁻¹⁵; the old to be respected – Leviticus 19³²; a store house of wisdom – Job 12¹²]
- We're living in a tent, which gradually gets less new and comfortable! The 'real me' is inside. But Christians move after death to a more permanent, better home (Ecclesiastes 12¹⁻⁷, 2 Corinthians 5¹⁻⁵, John 14^{2,3}, 2 Timothy 4⁶) that Jesus has gone to prepare
- Living as a Christian with the prospect of death ahead should thus prompt us to:
 - live with eternity in mind (Philippians 3²⁰, Colossians 3²⁻⁵, 2 Corinthians 5^{9,10}, Matthew 6¹⁹⁻²¹) and heaven, not this world as our focus
 - tell others about how they can escape (2 Peter 3⁹)

6. Coping with Death

- Death of one of his people is precious in the sight of God (Psalm 116¹⁵)
- Grieving – it's not wrong to grieve (Acts 9³⁶⁻³⁹), but the quality of our grief should be different (1 Thessalonians 4¹³), because we have the sure hope of what follows

7. Beyond Physical Death

- Absent from the body means being at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5⁸, Romans 8^{38,39}); 'asleep' is a good euphemism / illustration of death – like sleep, it's not to be feared and not permanent for the Christian. Unlike sleep though, where we have no consciousness, we are promised to be consciously in the Lord's presence after death
- Moreover, we won't be disembodied spirits – we are also ultimately promised glorious resurrection bodies (1 Corinthians 15^{35-44,51-53}, Philippians 3²⁰, 1 Thessalonians 4¹⁴⁻¹⁷)
- And we will be with the Lord forever...! Time, age, mourning, crying and pain no more! (Revelation 21^{3,4})
- Let us encourage one another with these words!

Our worship was brought to a conclusion as we watched and listened to our final song - Christ our hope in life and death.

What is our hope in life and death?

Christ alone, Christ alone.

What is our only confidence?

That our souls to Him belong.

Who holds our days within His hand?

What comes, apart from His command?

And what will keep us to the end?

The love of Christ, in which we stand.

O sing hallelujah! Our hope springs eternal,

O sing hallelujah!

Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.

What truth can calm the troubled soul?

God is good, God is good.

Where is His grace and goodness known?

In our great Redeemer's blood.

Who holds our faith when fears arise?

Who stands above the stormy trial?

Who sends the waves that bring us night
unto the shore, the rock of Christ?

O sing hallelujah! Our hope springs eternal.....

Unto the grave, what will we sing?
"Christ, He lives; Christ, He lives!"
And what reward will heaven bring?
Everlasting life with Him.
There we will rise to meet the Lord,
then sin and death will be destroyed
and we will feast in endless joy
when Christ is ours forevermore.

O sing hallelujah! Our hope springs eternal;

O sing hallelujah!

Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.

(O sing hallelujah! Our hope springs eternal;

O sing hallelujah!

Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.

Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oibli1rz7mw>

Songwriters: Matt Boswell / Matt Papa / Keith Getty / Matt Merker / Jordan Kauflin

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Tim encouraged us all to share in saying 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.**