



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on June 13th 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 recorded 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 begin a new series, today, entitled "Encouragement in Hard Times", and our worship is led by Paul, **who welcomes us all, wherever we are.**

"Well, good morning and welcome to our service here at Bethesda chapel. For those watching on the recording but particularly those of our fellowship here for our worship this morning, I pray that God will be with us in all we think and say and do.

I normally take a fair bit of time and trouble in the way of what I play in the form of songs, I love a good rousing start to a service and I like it to go out with a good rousing song, but today the service is about encouragement in hard times, and my first little clip, musical clip, and it is only a little clip, is this:"

(We watch as the opening scene from a film is played on the screen, showing a funeral procession in New Orleans, complete with jazz band, playing, very slowly, a dirge, "Just a closer walk with thee.")

It was clip from a James Bond film, 8th, Live and let die, from 1973 - set in New Orleans, and was an African – American Jazz Spiritual.

Paul explains: "The music is like this to represent / remember what it's like to have **a life's bondage to slavery**, not only slavery to white owners, but also slavery to a **life that is physically perishing** and **a life made captive to the power of sin.**

In contrast when the deceased is laid to rest in the ground- when they "**cut the body loose**"- as they say, the mourners "**cut loose**" as well, so that on the return journey the band leads everyone on the return journey with more rousing songs, **Celebrating** the hope of a **new eternal life of freedom from corruption and slavery beyond the grave**, and also a new life of freedom from the power of sins death here and now in **Jesus Christ**. Thats very much the theme of our service here today.

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Let's stand as we share in the song 'Be still my soul' sung by Kari Jobe." The majority of the words are familiar, but she includes a simple refrain that may not be known to you - if you are at home and wish to sing aloud or to yourself, no-one will know what tune is being sung elsewhere! Of course, you may wish to read the words instead:

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side;
with patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
in ev'ry change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heav'nly Friend
thru' thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake
to guide the future as he has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

In You I rest, in You I found my hope.
In You I trust, You never let me go.
I place my life within Your hands alone,
be still, my soul.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hast'ning on
when we shall be forever with the Lord,
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

In You I rest, in You I found my hope.
In You I trust, You never let me go.
I place my life within Your hands alone,
be still, my soul.

Text: Katharina von Schlegel, b. 1697; trans. by Jane Borthwick, 1813-1897
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<https://youtu.be/mq59iE3MhXM>

Paul leads us in "Bidding Prayers"

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.....
Lord God our father, as we meet together this morning, let us never forget who you are, what you have done, from the beginning of creation and our hope of what will come. We commit our lives to you this morning, and we come confessing that we are

not the people that we would have liked to have been in many ways. And yet we come knowing that you are a God who longs to embrace us and welcome us home into your family, and so we pray as we draw together as your family this morning, you will be here in the power of your Holy Spirit, so that we may hear your word and give you honour and praise in all that we seek to do. In Jesus name we pray. Amen"

Then continues:

"What **encouragement** can we give in '**Hard times**'?

Hard times are not just about coping with death and funerals, but are about **all of life and its challenges**, much like those lives seen in the book by Charles Dickens with the same title (**Hard Times**).

Today we begin a new series of Seven Sundays under the theme - **Encouragement in Hard Times**.

Today we are looking at three of God's, what I call, 'Antidotes to Hard times'.
The God of Peace, Hope and Love.

1st antidote to hard times - the God of Peace

We are not thinking about a quiet peaceful rest, in contrast to hard challenging times, but rather what was prophesied about in

Isaiah 9:6 And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**

The second hymn we will share this morning was written by **Edward Henry Bickerstaff (or Bickersteth!)** in 1875 who when visiting a dying relative in Harrogate- he read **Isaiah 26:3** to give him peace as he was dying- 'you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.' - then he noted down some words which he shared with the man before he died.

They became the words of this hymn which tell us: -

regardless of the dark world in which we live,
regardless of the pressing attentions of all its duties,
regardless of the concerns we have for all those near and dear to us regardless of whatever our futures may hold.

We need to be mindful of 'the blood of Jesus' - in other words mindful of Jesus sacrifice and its significance

We need to do his will - to do the things his word proclaims,

We need to know it is only him who can and will keep us safe,

We need to know he is sovereign king on the ultimate throne, from where he will call us to **heavens perfect peace.** "

Let us stand as we share in the song 'Peace Perfect Peace'. This is sung unaccompanied, by a choir of voices, and the music score is also shown on the screen at Bethesda, for those who enjoy following the music. It's a very simple melody.

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin;
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed;
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away:
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown;
Jesus we know, and he is on the throne.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
and Jesus call to heaven's perfect peace.

Author: Edward Henry Bickersteth
Public Domain, CCL No 5664
<https://youtu.be/ibqgZxWa6bM>

"Even when we do not feel at peace, through faith we are reconciled to God, and being reconciled we have God's perfect peace which can never be taken away no matter what is going on in our minds and emotions. **Romans 5:1** 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Now Brenda is going to come and read a poem that she brought to us on Thursday night and I thought it was so appropriate for I'll see you this morning that it should be shared."

Brenda shares with us:

"As we look back through our lives we can all recall ups and downs and times when we were anxious or things have gone wrong. It could be a small thing that upset or worried us or something really traumatic and also could be something that is happening right now to us or those we know.

I think one of the worst times for me was becoming unwell on our first campervan trip abroad. We were in Italy but managed to get back to our daughter's in France where I ended up in hospital with a very low heart rate. In inserting a temporary pacemaker things went wrong and I had to have heart surgery. A two week stay in hospital there was a lonely and worrying time - before mobile phone days. But with God's help, maybe in the form of one or two kind English speaking staff and of course my family, I got through and recovered. This loneliness and isolation has happened, of course, to many in recent months.

As Christians, in difficult times, we can look for guidance in our Bibles. In the first book of Peter, chapter 5 v 7 we read - "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." Last week I was looking for something in an old church magazine from 2005 (I used to edit the magazine then, so have kept them) and God led me to something else there - a poem written by our own Ruth Martin and based on that verse. I shared this at our Zoom prayer meeting and I think we were all moved by it. Paul has asked me to read it for you all today."

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

If you are feeling lonely
Then turn to the Man who knows,
Whose friends ran away and left Him
Alone to meet His foes.

If you are feeling rejected
Then turn to the Man who knows,
Whose neighbours cast Him away from them,
Onto the dusty roads.

If you are feeling tearful
Then turn to the Man who cries,
As His people reject His teaching of love
And turn to hatred and lies.

If you are feeling outcast
Then turn to the Man who shares,
Who teaches the meaning of friendship
Because He's the Man who cares.

If you are feeling forsaken
Then turn to the Man who knows,
Who said His friend would deny Him
Before the cockerel crows.

If you are feeling weary
Then turn to the Man who knows,
Who placed on Himself our transgressions
To bear the world's heaviest loads.

He went to the cross, in His love for you
And then from the grave He arose,
He took all your pain and anguish
Because He's the Man who Knows.

By Ruth Martin
(I Peter 5 v7)

Paul continues with his 2nd antidote to hard times - Hope

"Closely linked to the gift of peace is the gift of Hope,
Christian hope is **the confident and joyful expectation of good things to come.**

Heb 10:23 let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.

Although we live in a world of catastrophes & disasters, a world which is becoming more atheistic, ultimately the world is in God's hands, who is working his purpose out. 'as year succeed to years' and as Philippians 2:13 tells us.

In Rom 15:13 -we see that God's wisdom and perspective gives us **hope**, which we might wrongly think of as a lonely expectation, but God's **hope** comes with a joy and peace, knowing it's truth even in the middle of what seem chaos.

Read v 13, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit'. Is your hope overflowing.....more than we need?

The opposite of **Hope** is the temptation to **Despair**

In Isaiah 61:3 we should **not have a spirit of despair**,

But instead do you know what it says we should have?

To dress ourselves/put on Praise like clothing for all to see who we are! The physical cloths we put on may say a lot about us. some of us don't like being told what is appropriate to wear, 'surely you're not going out like that' but then we are happy to take pride in a uniform that distinguishes our allegiance be that military clothing or sports ware this weekend as we follow our football teams (where hope takes on an altogether different meaning).

The second aspect of Christian hope is as redeemed sinners, we have a **sure and certain hope of heaven when we die**, we have been given **citizenship** of heaven here and now, therefore no longer officially belong to this world, we are only here as Ambassadors of heaven and the king of Glory. (Phil 3:20)

The third aspect of **Christian hope** is the second coming of Jesus Christ, **1 John 3: 2-3** says... we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, and we will see him as he is - Pure, so those of us who have this hope should be making themselves ready.

As I look back through history reading about Christian martyrs who stood firm with those old qualities of "valiance and steadfastness" it challenges and encourages me about the strength of my trust and reliance in my Hope.

Let us stand as we share in the song: My Hope is built on nothing less"

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
all other ground is sinking sand,
all other ground is sinking sand.

In ev'ry rough and stormy gale,
my anchor holds within the vale.
When all around my soul gives way,
he then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand...

Not earth, nor hell, my soul can move;
I rest upon unchanging love.
I trust his righteous character,
his counsel, promise, and his pow'r. [Refrain]
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand...

When he shall come with trumpet sound,
oh, may I then in him be found,
dressed in his righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne. [Refrain]
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand...

Author: Edward Mote
Public Domain, CCL No 5664
<https://youtu.be/Ty8tw7ydxB4>

Judith now leads us in our Prayers of Intercession:

"Loving God,
We pray for our world today, knowing that all is not as you would have it be.

In a moment of stillness, we bring you all the things that are weighing heavily on our hearts, all the sad news and difficult situations in our own lives, those of our families, our church and our world.

We take a moment to unburden.

[silence]

Lord you know all the hurts we carry with us in our hearts.

And Lord, you know the sorrow of a world that is far from perfect.

You know the tears of the bereaved, the righteous anger in the fights against poverty, injustice, corruption and human greed, the uncertainty of a pandemic.

This crisis has brought us up short, Lord, overturning our way of life, shattering our security, leaving us feeling vulnerable, scared, alone – concerned for our welfare, wary of the future.

Help us to remember that for many in our world, this is not the exception but the norm, thousands having grown used to living with the constant threat of disease – malaria, Ebola, HIV cholera to name but some.

Help us, through what we are wrestling with now, to understand and empathise with what too many wrestle with repeatedly, to realise how fortunate we have been and to resolve to help build a fairer, more caring world for all.

We remember the leaders of the G7, meeting in Cornwall, and ask that they may make decisions that reflect compassion for this hurting world, that they be not motivated by self-seeking aggrandisement or nationalistic priorities, but the greater good of others.

We ask that you be with the leaders of our own country, as they decide whether to further relax the restrictions currently in place or maintain them for longer, as the situation flexes and changes.. We know that there are many things to balance, and pray that you will give wisdom, Lord, to those who must take these decisions, those who must formulate plans, those who must weigh up the options and decide on the path least painful for all.

See us through this difficult time, we ask you, but see us also through the time beyond that, and the challenges it will surely bring.

Whilst it is right and proper that we remember the needs of the wider world, we also have concerns within our own church family. We particularly remember Anne, following the death of Frank last weekend, and ask that she and the family will take comfort from knowing that Frank is now at peace, with you, his Lord and Saviour, whom he served so faithfully during his time on this earth.

We also remember Kathleen and David, following their sons Matthew's diagnosis of leukaemia. We cannot begin to imagine the heartache they have experienced over this last week, and especially ask that they will know your loving arms upholding them during the weeks and months to come. We are thankful that they have been told the condition is treatable, but we all know the Matthew is at the start of a challenging journey. We remember Susannah, his wife, particularly as she is apart from her family in Sicily, and Clara, their young daughter, who will both need all the loving support they can be given over the coming days. Be with them Lord we ask, and with all those others who have concerns about health issues, whether they be great or small, for we know that all are important to you.

Whether our prayers are vocalised or from our hearts, we bring them to you, however inadequate we feel they are. We commit ourselves, our loved ones, and the world beyond, into your keeping. Amen."

Paul continues with the 3rd antidote to hard times – Love

"The Perfect love, of the God of Love

Our God is not only the God of Peace and the God of Hope, but also the God of love. Love is a major theme throughout the bible mentioned 551 times(NIV)

1 John 4: 8 tells us that God is love

Jeremiah 31:3 He loves us with an everlasting love

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, to make us children of his heavenly father.

1 Peter 5:7 give all our cares to him, because he cares about you

1 John 4:18 that perfect love drives out fear whatever that fear may be.

Whose is that perfect love, it is surely not ours. Just as we will not have perfect peace this side of heaven, neither will we have perfect love in this life. The only perfect love is the love of God for us, and the fear that it removes is our fear, as we allow God to fill us with His peace and hope.

To whom much is given much will be required (Luke 12:48)

In Ephesians 5:1-2 we are told to follow Gods example therefore as he loved us and gave up himself as an offering to others, so we should live our lives for others with care and love. In fact, if we are not living a life of love for other brothers & sisters 1 John 3:14 we are showing we have not yet passed from death to the life that only Jesus Christ can give.

How do you feel about that challenge? - Inadequate!

However wholeheartedly thankful to Jesus, we will fail, - so what's the point if we are set to fail?

It is because God knows and helps us in our weakness and delights in using unexpected people, when we are humble he lifts us up. Examples -the women at the well, Peter's denial of Jesus. The bible is filled with stories of how God loves us, and gives people a new start. What an encouragement, what a God who by his mercy and grace shares his love, hope and peace.

We began this morning by seeing a snippet of the film 'Live and let die'.

To Live and let live means if somebody wrongs you, you can simply forgive and forget.

To Live and let die means if somebody wrongs you then kill them!

That attitude may be good for Bond movies but our calling is to **Live and let others live, not only by our forgiveness, but by bring them to live a life far more thrilling and meaningful than characters in a Bond movie.**

John 10:10 I have come that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness. 1 John 4:10 and love consists in this, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Let us stand as we share in the song - **The love of God** "- written in the 19th century (as you might guess from the words) but with an up to date arrangement: it may be a song you have heard in the past, or may be new to you.

The love of God is greater far
than tongue or pen can ever tell;
it goes beyond the highest star,
and reaches to the lowest hell.
The wand'ring child is reconciled
by God's beloved Son.
The aching soul again made whole,
and priceless pardon won.
 O love of God, how rich and pure!
 How measureless and strong!
 It shall forevermore endure—
 the saints' and angels' song.

When ancient time shall pass away,
and human thrones and kingdoms fall;
when those who here refuse to pray
on rocks and hills and mountains call;
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
all measureless and strong;
grace will resound the whole earth round—
the saints' and angels' song.
 O love of God, how rich and pure!....

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
and were the skies of parchment made;
were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
and ev'ryone a scribe by trade;
to write the love of God above
would drain the ocean dry;
nor could the scroll contain the whole,
though stretched from sky to sky.
 O love of God, how rich and pure!....

Author: Frederick M. Lehman
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<https://youtu.be/Vq9LpAVysbM>

You may have noticed that we have not yet had a scripture reading, but Paul now reads **2 Peter 1 v 2-11** from **The Living Bible**, which perhaps gives this a more **relevant context**.

"Do you want more and more of Gods kindness and peace? Then learn to know him better and better. For as you know him better he will give you, through his great

power, everything you need for living a truly good life. He even shares his own glory and his own goodness with us. And by that same mighty power he has given us all the other rich and wonderful blessings he promised; for instance, the promise to save us from the lust and rottenness all around us, and give us his own character.

But to obtain these gifts, you need more than faith; you must also work hard to be good, and even that is not enough. For then you must learn to know God better and discover what he wants you to do. Next learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have his way with you. This will make possible the next step, which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them, and finally will grow to love them deeply. The more you go on in this way, the more you will grow strong spiritually and become fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ. But anyone who fails to go after these additions to faith is blind indeed, or at least very shortsighted, and has forgotten that God delivered him from the old life of sin so that now he can live a strong, good life for the Lord.

So dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really among those who God has called and chosen, and then you will never stumble or fall away. And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

We close our service today as we all join together in a Blessing:

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace. Amen

NWBA - A Season of Prayer

Each day during our season of prayer, you are invited to pray for two churches in our NWBA community. This week's prayer focus is:

Monday 21st June 2021

Chorlton Central Church, Manchester (Baptist/URC)

Please pray for our experiments with hybrid church -(Zoom and Church)

Rishton Baptist Christian Fellowship, Lancs

Pray that we go back into Church stronger in the Lord and that God will move mightily

Tuesday 22nd June 2021

Little Leigh Baptist Church, Northwich

How we continue with reduced numbers.

Leyland Baptist, Lancs

Discernment in how to be and do church, grasping new opportunities

Wednesday 23rd June 2021

St Helens Baptist Church, Merseyside

Pray for wisdom and guidance especially as we search for a new pastor

Tottlebank Baptist Church, Cumbria(The young people camped here many years ago!!!)

That the elderly will have the courage to return to church

Thursday 24th June 2021

Milton Baptist Church, Acton Bridge, Cheshire

for discernment for the future and that the way will open up for a fresh start.

Sion Baptist Church, Higher Cloughfold, Rossendale

that business as usual will not be its usual business

Friday 25th June 2021

Abbey Road Baptist Church, Barrow-in-Furness

Thanksgiving for a deeper understanding of prayer and our relationship with God

Tarporley Baptist and Methodist Church, Cheshire

For guidance on how best to take advantage of the new opportunities that have emerged recently as we engage with our community and society with the gospel

Saturday 26th June 2021

Bridgewater Baptist, Eccles. Salford

That God would help us reach the communities we serve in person and online, to His glory.

Bethel, Macclesfield

please pray for Bethel as we seek to connect with our community with acts of love and kindness. We are considering a cafe on Saturdays serving food; giving clothing; discussing whether to run a Community Money Advice centre. Possible Messy Church; we really need to know the Lord's thinking in all this.

Sunday 27th June 2021

Maghull Baptist Church, Liverpool

That we will realise our dependence on God to receive his love which will become a reality in each of our lives as we seek to follow him

Millom Baptist Church, Cumbria

Please pray for restoration of those who have felt particularly isolated without much internet access, or have struggled with anxiety or grief and loss

We hope you'll be able to join us for virtual fellowship:

Sundays at 11.45, Meeting ID: 962 5576 8258, Passcode: 491306.

Prayer meeting on Thursdays at 7.30pm. Meeting ID: 923 9680 7071, Passcode: 411034

Its very easy to join on the phone, and it would be lovely to hear your voices again!

Just ring 02034 815237, then use the ID and password as above when you are prompted.