



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on March 12th 2023 at 10:45, meeting at Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is being led by Alec, safely returned from his time away in Germany.

Alec begins by welcoming everyone, and inviting all to join in with the same opening prayer as used over a number of weeks, but still as yet, Alec believes, not fully fulfilled. It was shown on the screen:

"We pray that this day in our little church will be a day that everybody remembers. We pray it will be a day that brings glory and honour to the Name of our loving Lord. That God is so mightily present, that no-one will be unaware of how real, how great and how near to us He is. May God bless us all anew each day from now on that Galligreaves is truly the place from which people speak saying, "That is where the living God and His praising people are." "Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord." Amen

We were then invited to join together singing our first hymn, accompanied again this week by our worship group, Trevor, Paul W, Kate and Judith:

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
as Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

**"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!**

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"....

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"...

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Notices were shared by Tony, reminding us that all were welcome to stay for lunch today, that next Sunday we will be holding our **Church Members Meeting following the service**, and that all are invited to join in a 5 minute time of prayer at the back of the church after our service today.

Alec then invited all to share in a time of "Praise and worship" beginning with: Psalm 150, Praise the Lord, displayed on the screen:

You made the starry hosts, You traced the mountain peaks,
You paint the evening sky with wonders.
The earth, it is Your throne, from desert to the sea
all nature testifies Your splendour

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, sing His greatness all creation.
Praise the Lord, raise your voice -
you heights and all you depths; from furthest east to west -
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord**

You reached into the dust, in love, Your Spirit breathed,
You formed us in Your very likeness,
to know Your wondrous works, to tell Your mighty deeds,
to join the everlasting chorus.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,

Let symphonies resound, let drums and choirs ring out:
all heaven hear the sound of worship.
Let every nation bring its honours to the King,
A roar of harmonies eternal.

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, sing His greatness all creation.
Praise the Lord, raise your voice -
you heights and all you depths; from furthest east to west,
you distant burning stars; all creatures near and far
from sky to sea to shore, sing out forevermore:
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.**

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followed by Trevor and the group playing:

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.**

Authors: Jordan Kauflin, Keith Getty, Matt Boswell, Matt Papa, Matthew Merker CCLI Song # 7147502 Copyrights@ 2020 Getty Music Hymns and Songs (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.) Love Your Enemies Publishing (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.) Messenger Hymns (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.) Jordan Kauflin Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Matthew Merker Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) CCL no 5664

And finally, the group again playing, we sang:

In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain;
then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me, for I am His and He is mine -
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.

No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand:
till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

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Bible reading: Joshua 1 1-9 was read by Janet

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant: 'Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the River Jordan into the land I am about to give to them - to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates - all the Hittite country - to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

'Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'

Alec's Message:

Three weeks ago we began a mini-series on "Encouraging one another" with the theme "Looking to the Lord" and followed that up with what I called the "Lego message" where we looked at two connected themes: how we can be enabled to encourage one another in the Lord and how God is building up His church here in Blackburn; and as you will remember if you were here or if you have seen the recording made and posted by Paul and Judith-to whom as always our warmest thanks for their ongoing labour of love in the recording work-as you will have seen we saw that the lego blocks we held were pictures of blocks that we need to let the Lord identify for us as in our lives and hearts there may be attitudes and other things like pride, disobedience and unforgiveness, which are blocks which hinder and work against His working in our personal lives and in our community life as the Body of Christ, and that we have to let go of the blocks and let God run the show in our hearts and minds, in our life as His Body each day.

So today we are by God's grace continuing with the theme of "encouraging one another" and looking at a number of different challenging Scriptures that help us in this.

Two weeks ago you may recall we looked at 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Ephesians 4:29 and 1 Peter 2: 4-5. Let's look at them and say them together once again?

Today we begin with a wonderful promise. Here it is: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Where do we find this in the Bible? Do you know? (Joshua 1:9)

Now you know because we have said this many times already that we have to look at the context in which this was said to grasp and understand the true meaning so I asked Janet to read the first part of the chapter to us and for us.

The verse begins with the words: “Have I not commanded you?” although these words significantly do not appear on the screen nor on 90% of the pictures with this verse offered in the internet. The first thing we might pick up here is that as the people of God we are under the Lordship of Christ. We are not our own; we were bought and paid for with a high price; Jesus the only Son of the Living God died in our place to pay the penalty for our wrongs. We do not belong to ourselves any more. We are under the authority of the one and only living God who has commanded us to be strong and courageous.

I feel we should be very clear on this. He is our Lord; and in His compassion, in His mercy, in His love He has not just given us an instruction which we might follow if we feel like it or when we think it's appropriate or when we feel able to connect with it but a command for all time.

Be strong and courageous for I have commanded you.

Now the word used here in Joshua 1:6 and 1:9 is the word I mentioned 2 weeks ago and that is

חָזַק Chazaq

This is used only nine times to mean encourage in the Old Testament but being told to be strong and courageous is basically the same thing as being encouraged isn't it. Being strong and being courageous moves us on, moves us forward, tackles our fears and our discouragement.

But what does this look like in practice? It sounds really good doesn't it! “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Let's look very briefly at six things that might make this difficult to do in practice.

But we might feel inadequate. We might feel our weakness so deeply that we are unable to be strong and move forward and stand motionless and lifeless like a statue in a museum. We may even be in a prominent public place and frequently observed, photographed and filmed but be as still as a statue, unmoved and unmovable, paralysed and completely passive and we cannot move forward. So we might feel inadequate but we don't need to be because the Lord our God will be with us wherever we go.

We might look at our circumstances rather than to the Lord of our lives. We might say I cannot cope with this, I cannot go on with this, I cannot see any way ahead, I cannot see any way out of this under the circumstances. But our attitude should be not to be living tied to, dependent on, being literally under our outward circumstances so to speak in the same way perhaps that we often say that such and such a person is “under the weather” but

living in accordance with the reality of our relationship to the Lord and to our fellow believers. We live under His authority, according to His leading, knowing His way is perfect for He is our God. He will never put us in a situation with which we cannot in His strength cope. The Bible says: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." (1 Cor. 15:58) Yes we will be tempted: tempted to give up, tempted to go our own way, tempted to ignore God's leadings, tempted in all kinds of ways. But with God we will endure.

We might be trying to carry all the burdens ourselves. Show the bricks and the wheelbarrow example. (this shows a man pushing a wheelbarrow and carrying a load of bricks, who is stopped, and told to put the bricks in the wheelbarrow - which he does, then carries the wheelbarrow!)

<https://tenor.com/view/brick-wheelbarrow-gif-18828372>

<https://media.tenor.com/DWdg7TuN4PkAAAPo/brick-wheelbarrow.mp4>

Well it looks funny or stupid or irrational or something. Even being stopped in his tracks and being advised, informed or told to put the bricks in the wheelbarrow didn't bring a great deal of insight or understanding did it! But we are not unlike this in our dealings with the challenges and weights in our lives.

1 Peter 5:7 says "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for us". Just throw it on him, and let him carry your burdens. Jesus said we could cast all of our cares on him because he cares for us! There is nothing we are going through that we cannot cast on the Lord.

We might be living out our own agendas choosing not to fulfil what the Lord requires of us. We need to ask God to tell us when that happens either through His Word or through His Spirit speaking to our hearts and minds. He will be with us wherever we go doesn't mean that we should take our lives in a direction that He wouldn't have wanted for us.

We might have never felt that the Lord is really in our lives walking with us. We might be discouraged that we don't have any feeling of Him being with us at all.

In Deuteronomy 1:30-31 we read, "The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

You will in all probability know this story so well but it will be good to remind ourselves of it.

A pilgrim arrived in heaven and God said to him, "Would you like to see where you've come from?" When the pilgrim responded that he would, God unfolded the story of his whole life and he saw footprints from the cradle to the grave.

Only there were not only the footprints of the pilgrim, but another set of footprints alongside.

The pilgrim said, "I see my footprints, but whose are those?"

And the Lord said, "Those are My footprints. I was with you all the time."

Then they came to a dark, discouraging valley and the pilgrim said, "I see only one set of footprints through that valley.

I was so discouraged. You were not there with me. It was just as I thought—I was so all alone!"

Then the Lord said, "But I was there. I was with you the whole time.

You see, those are MY footprints. I carried you right through that dark valley."

But maybe there is another reason why we don't know the strength, the power, the encouragement and the courage of God in our lives.

Maybe we have never given our lives over to God in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

Maybe we are trying to do everything on our own and it is not working. Maybe we need to remember our Creator and come back to the script He prepared for us.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (MSG)

Two weeks ago I finished with this slide; do you remember it?

It sounds like such a straightforward statement doesn't it: let go and let God. At first glance two weeks ago maybe we thought that is really easy to say, but probably very difficult to do. We might even have thought two weeks ago or be thinking today that people who say let go and let God are probably those whose lives are basically free from stress, worries, fears and problems.

So "let go and let God" may seem simple, but it is and it isn't. We need simply to give our lives; to surrender our lives to the Lord.

Now you may say we have been here before. Two weeks ago I quoted from Psalm 139:23 didn't I? "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts". In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

What is it that is blocking us from making ourselves wholly available to the Lord? What is it that is blocking us from surrendering our lives to the Lord? What is it that we are frightened of doing, what are we frightened of giving up? Why are we perhaps fearful of what He wants to do in our hearts and lives?

Stanley Jones said: "Surrender the thing you fear into the hands of God. Turn it right over to God and ask Him to solve it with you. Fear is keeping things in your own hands; faith is turning them over into the hands of God—and leaving them there."

And as we entrust everything we are and have into the hands of God it is sometimes it may be helpful to meditate on the promises of our faithful God.

In Psalm 143:5 we read: "I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done" (NIV).

Let us replace, let us substitute, let us exchange, let us swap our frantic thoughts with meditating on God's promises such as, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5, NIV).

Maybe we need to have a kind of "letting go" motto? Maybe like for example, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" from Isaiah 30:15?

In any event we need not as a belated a New Year's resolution but for every day and every night to take a simple, a straightforward, an uncomplicated decision to resolve not to act on the basis of fear but on the basis of faith.

The Lord Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34, NIV).

Jesus didn't suggest that we won't have trouble; far from it. He did say, however, that we should focus our minds and hearts on this day and its challenges. That's plenty. The same God who is with us and empowers us to meet today will be there tomorrow.

In John 16:33 we read that Jesus says: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

So we can maybe see that "let go and let God" isn't expecting too much and is a reachable goal for our lives on this planet; that is, we do it one day at a time; and very soon we will be with Him outside of time and we won't worry about any of these things at all.

Perfect love casts out fear. May I encourage us all to know the perfect love of God in our hearts? Let God into every area, every nook and cranny, every hidden corner of your life; let the loving Lord Jesus rule over you in might and power, and may we each be filled continually with the Holy Spirit whom God gives to each of His children. For if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ He does not belong to Him.

Our Prayers for others were then led by Becky:

"Dear Lord,

Another Sunday, another week gone by already.

We thank you for all the good things in our lives, big and small. Thank you for the people who care about us. Thank you for the beauty of the world, the birds, the trees, the sky. Thank you for the sunshine we have had recently which lets us be reminded that spring is on its way.

Thank you for birth, for new births, that bring families closer together. Thank you for friends who look out for one another and are always there when we need help. Thank you for our families, siblings, parents, children, grandchildren and for some of us, great grandchildren even. Thank you Lord that after leaving this world behind, you still look out for us and protect us, in our heavenly home. Thank you for everything that makes me who I am, or helps me grow as a person. Thank you most of all for loving all of us. Make us worthy of this love. Help us to come up to your expectation of us. Help us to be bold and boastful, even, about your wonderful love for us.

Oh Father, how privileged we are and blessed, that we can come to this building and carry our bibles with pride; that we can sing and worship your name without any fear of punishment. Oh Father let us send out through our singing, a prayer to this area. We hope as we hand out invitations and friendship that we can tempt the people into our church, that they will come and listen to our lovely services. Let them find kindness and warmth and genuine friendship here at Blackburn Baptist Church.

We do miss a lot of good, kind people we have known and loved for many years. We keep them in our thoughts and prayers and pray for peace and happiness for them always.

We pray as well Father, for the wider world. We think and pray still for Turkey and Syria as they try to re-build their broken homes and their broken hearts. We thank you for touching the hearts of many hundreds of everyday people who couldn't wait to help the desperate victims to renew their lives, as best they can. Dozens and dozens of kind-hearted professionals who are giving their time and skills to those heartbroken people. We thank you for every act of kindness shown to the people in need.

We bring before you all the members of our church who are struggling and in need of prayers right now. You know each of them by name - Morag and Allen, David A, Don just to name a few. I am sure we each of us know someone personally who is in need of prayer or physical help, right now. Help each one of us to ring, or write, or contact by phone.

Let us pray for Alec our Pastor and for the dedication of our deacons. We pray for their physical strength, and their emotions as they work out ways of encouraging our church to grow.

Let us just be quiet for a couple of minutes as we think about and pray for someone we know who is struggling right now.

Dear Lord, we are all very vulnerable at times. We all need "lifting up" and feeling "we are loved". We have a "special friend" we feel we can confide in, but this is my message, my prayer, personal to you Lord.

'Dear God, I am learning to be quiet. Just to be. And to know that you are with me. Thank you. That I don't need special words to talk to you, or even any words at all. You are here. I am here. You hold me, In the stillness of this moment. Amen.' "

And finally, our Closing (Offertory hymn) was played by the music group:

All the way my Saviour leads me- what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy, who through life has been my guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort, here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well;
for I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Saviour leads me- cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for ev'ry trial, feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter and my soul athirst may be,
gushing from the rock before me, lo! A spring of joy I see;
gushing from the rock before me, lo! A spring of joy I see.

All the way my Saviour leads me- Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day,
this my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way;
this my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.

Authors: Fanny Jane Crosby, Robert Lowry CCLI SONG # 2741682 Words and Music Public domain CCL No 5664

After a prayer of thanksgiving, Alec invited us to sing the Doxology "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" (this week sung to the more familiar tune)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Authors: Louis Bourgeois, Thomas Ken CCLI SONG # 56204 Public domain CCL No 5664

And our service came to a close as we said together the Grace:

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.