

Dear friends,

For those of you unable to join with us at Bethesda Chapel at present, we are looking to provide you with an outline of the service so that you can feel a part of the church family. You may need to use a bit of imagination!

Sunday August 16th 2020.

Our time of worship is led by Paul Carter.

Welcome, notices and Call to worship

We are now going to watch a video from Resound Music, a group of songwriters who are allowing all their music to be used by churches over the UK at this time. Those at home can read and choose their own tune if they so wish.

Video:

Heaven's voice brings the dawn,
out of chaos is born
new creation
exploding with wonder;
planets spin into space,
earth and sky find their place,
all of nature
awakes to its maker.

You say everything you've made is good:
the sun, the moon,
the stars that shine above.

You say everything you've made is good:
the land, the seas
and all that lives and breathes.

*We sing praise to the maker,
to our King, our creator:
praise to Almighty God.
All creation together
singing one hallelujah:
praise to Almighty God.*

We are formed from the dust,
with your image in us,
given life by the breath
you are breathing;
called to work and to care,
called to nurture and share;
called to serve you
and walk where you're leading.

CCL# 7157373

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We join together in

Responsive prayers of confession:

Be quite still for a few moments and think about the fact that you are with God who created the whole world; the beauty that surrounds you, and the peace of this church.

We say together:

Lord , surround me with your spirit;

Remove from my mind all distractions, inattention and coldness;

Open my eyes to see you, my ears to hear you,

Help me to be still in your presence,

And hear my prayers for Christ's sake.

We confess that we have lived superficially.

We have failed to listen to your word or put it into practice.

Forgive us for our selfishness in doing what we should not have done, and for not doing what we should.

Humbly and sorrowfully we long for your forgiveness.

As we come to confess our sins we thank and praise you for your grace and the promise of your forgiveness.

Renew and empower us with your Holy Spirit we pray.

Amen

Now we're going to listen to a short song you may remember from some time ago, its particularly relevant to our reading today. If you are at home you can sing it as loudly as you like.

Song:

'For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; for such there is no law'

Prayers of intercession, led by Debbie Doggart

Many of you will be familiar with the hymn we are going to sing now:

O thou who camest from above
the fire celestial to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire
and still stir up the gift in me.

Still let me prove thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,

till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete

Charles Wesley CCI no 5664

Our reading today is included within the Message:

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Message and Reading: Galatians 5, 16-26

Galatians 5: 16 – 26

Life by the Spirit / Keeping in step with the Spirit – How?
But those who live by the Spirit bear the fruit of the Spirit

Jeremiah 17:7 & 8 favourite image/passage

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

⁸They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.”

In this passage Paul shows the Contrast between Spirit and Flesh.

He wants to remind them of the sort of people they were, and how at odds that way of life was and is from the new life they have been given as adopted children of God. It is Pauls warning to all those within the church at Galatia and us that reengaging in these practices is incompatible with a life that has the Holy Spirit.

Read v16.....

- a) V16 – Walk implies both *direction, and by the Spirit = empowerment to walk*. To walk in scripture regularly represents *the pattern of one’s life. To be subject to the spirits leading and power*.

– The desires of the flesh – represent not only our bodily cravings, but all the ordinary desires and challenges we have still living with a fallen nature. Because our battle is not just with flesh and blood but with the spiritual forces of evil (Eph 6:12)

- b) Read V17 – Paul says there is a real battle going on between the flesh, our fallen nature and the Spirit of God. Paul in writing to the church in Rome acknowledges that the Christian life is a struggle – a war if you like between the flesh and the Spirit.
- c) V18 – (therefore) be led by the Spirit, the verb in Greek implies an *active* personal Holy Spirit guidance. Present tense, about an on-going activity. Going back In Galatians 3:2&5 Paul has said ‘did you receive the Holy Spirit by works / law? Or by *hearing with faith? And in v5*’ So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? ⁶So just as Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” so we need to hear Gods word with faith believing we will receive the same promised Holy Spirit into our lives, to lead us.

And so, we come first to the specifics of a life without the Spirit of God. I have put these groups these into categories:

The first are **Sexual Sins v19** and are ‘evident’, they are the actions unbelievers gravitate towards, they are part of the culture we live in today. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality can be seen freely on our TV, the internet (which apparently contains 30-37% pornography, and 88% of porn contains violence against women). marriage breakups and sexual infidelity is commonplace and the LGBT lobby are gaining acceptance as the norm.

The second category **v20 Idolatry**, includes Sorcery/witchcraft – these are headings that show people desire to be in touch with the spiritual realm, though only through humanly invented means, they supposedly say they have God as their ultimate objective and yet reject the way God has provided. John 14:6&7 Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. But it would seem that many are prepared to accept any God as long as it is not Jesus Christ.

Sorcery/witchcraft also fall within this category they use chemical compounds seeking contact with the spiritual realm. Idolatry is an extreme reverence of anything – money, power....etc.

The third category is a long list of **Violence and hostility v20b- 21 read** as you look down the list you can see a constant tension, from person to person, group to group, country to country. We see it not only constantly in our politics, but in our neighbourhoods and workplaces. Many of us could share stories of dissention & factions as our world is becoming less about community and more about individual rights and the **me** society, my interests, my benefits, my life.....etc where envy and jealousy says I should have had the promotion, the new car or benefits that others have. These things trouble those who cannot find joy and contentment with what God has given us.

V 21 Drunkenness and orgies are on the list to emphasise the ways in which people misuse God’s good gifts in destructive and sinful ways. In the OT wine was associated with Joy and Celebration (Neh 8:10 – Psm 104:15) and drunkenness is constantly condemned. Likewise, sex is shown as a precious gift for a husband and wife, but when abused and taken out of the context of family life, it becomes highly destructive for all involved (1 Cor 6:18-20) ¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body [E] and in your spirit, which are God’s.

V21, Paul then gives a warning, that those who do such things (present Participle meaning – those who ‘make a practice of doing such that it becomes a pattern of life) will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is because their outward conduct indicates their inward spiritual status, and they do not show signs of being a child of God who have the Holy Spirit within them.

.....

In the OT God had given his people a promise, the first of this was make them clean from all that had defiled and disqualified them, as they had washed their hands of God and his ways, God is prepared to clean and prepare them to re-join his family.

The second part of this promise was the gift of a new heart and to put a new spirit within them, that they would want to do what God commanded and be able to walk in His ways

Ezekiel 36 ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

600year have then passed when Jesus comes on the scene and meets Nicodemus

John 3;1-21 **Jesus reminds Nicodemus of that passage and promise in the book of Ezekiel**

⁵ "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Paul speaking to the Corinthian church gives a similar challenge. 1 Cor 6

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor ^[b]homosexuals, nor ^[c]sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were ^[d]sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

The good news of the gospel is therefore Jesus offer of a new life, our old lives no matter how selfish shameful and sinful, washed clean. Our hard hearts exchanged for new hearts like his heart, and having his Holy Spirit actively working within us.

What we are offered is not a vaccine or an antidote, but a new life with a new heart and a new mind through the power of Gods presence within us. This then gives a new outcome of the fruit of God's Spirit. He produces positive attributes of Godly character such as we see in the life and example of Jesus.

So, lets get back to the passage to see what this fruit is – v22read

The first of these is **Love** because it is the greatest foundational quality, 1 Cor 13 and most clearly reflects Gods character. Our first love will be towards God, with all of our heart, soul and strength. And then to all others in the same way as we love ourselves. So, if we looked again at 1 Cor 6 v9 by comparison, how would our love for married women be seen? if we loved them like we love ourselves, we would want God's best for them, rather than having them break their marriage for our immediate pleasure. The same with single women, we should in the same way want the best for them.

Joy comes 2nd because our first Joy is rejoicing in Gods Salvation for us, Christians have Joy in fulfilling God's will and purpose, knowing whatever our circumstance the presence and power of his Holy Spirit will always be with us. **Peace** is then the product of God having reconciled sinners to himself, giving us confidence and freedom in God's presence.

Patience - **shows** that Christians are following Gods plan and timetable – rather than pressing home their own agenda.

Kindness – means showing goodness, generosity and sympathy towards others. Rom 2:4 ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's **kindness** is intended to lead you to repentance?

Goodness – means working for the benefit of others, Paul mentions it in Gal 6:10 ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Faithfulness – divine characteristic – doing what one says we will do. loyalty, dedication and keeping our promises, just as God is faithful a just to keep his promises to us.

Gentleness – Matt 11:29 ²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. This is a picture of Jesus who gives people the ability to rest in Him, one example comes to mind when Jesus was brought to the women who was caught in adultery

Self-control – we may all want to control the way others deal with us. We may not like someone’s attitude at work, and even when we don’t challenge them, how do we control our tongue in talking about them?

Read V24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. To be a disciple of Jesus he said we must take up our cross and follow him. This is a picture of sacrifice and death of our old life and will, in order we can serve others

V25/6 keep in step with the Spirit, this has a different verb than v16 and points to ‘walking in line behind a leader’ being modest and unassuming rather than conceited.

I began with a picture of a fruit (of the spirit) tree planted by and drawing life from the river.

I would like to extend that picture a little, which reminds me of my river fishing days as a young boy. I would walk up the river bank against the current, watching the healthy purposeful fish who would be swimming up-stream to eventually spawn and produce new life, and the only things that were going with the flow would be the ‘flotsam and jetsam’ of life (wreckage, waste and those things that were dead) undoubtedly it requires more effort to go against the flow of any river or any way of life. however just like the healthy purposeful fish, we are called to keep facing and drawing closer to the source of new life. For some of the fish all of the effort will result in their ultimate sacrifice to produce a new cycle of young fish.

The same may be true for us, but who would like to have the life of flotsam & jetsam devoid of purpose and power.

How does your life compare?

Do you know the transforming life of Jesus Christ for yourself?

Do you know the Holy Spirits presence and power within?

Please contact us for help through our web site during the Covid pandemic

We bring our service to a close as we watch and listen to another song, this time written by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, and sung by Krysten Getty, who again have given permission for their music to be used at this time.

Song (Video)

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
give me faith for what I cannot see,
give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
may Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin,
in each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least,
gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
giving life to all that God has made,
show Your power once again on earth,
cause Your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
lead us on the road of sacrifice,
that in unity the face of Christ
may be clear for all the world to see.

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

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Benediction