

Blackburn Baptist Church Virtual Service, 12 July 2020



Welcome

A big welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church for our 'virtual' service for today. We pray that the Lord will richly bless you as you join in worship.

Song: *All Hail the Power of Jesu's Name!*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

All hail the power of Jesu's name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe
And crown him Lord of all!

Crown him, you martyrs of our God,
Who from his altar call;
Exalt the Stem of Jesse's Rod,
And crown him Lord of all!

O that with yonder sacred throng,
We at his feet may fall,
We'll join the everlasting song
And crown him Lord of all!

Opening Prayer

Father, we come into your glorious presence this morning in the precious name of Jesus. We come with shouts of joy, worshipping you with a gladness that overwhelms our hearts, because through your Spirit we have come to know Jesus, your Beloved Son, as our Saviour and Friend. Father, we declare today that he is ours and we are yours in him; we give You praise because we know that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture. We exalt you because your faithfulness and love towards us is boundless, and though we often fail you we thank you that your forgiveness brings us each and every day such peace and reassurance. Amen.

Birthdays

It's Jean's birthday this coming week. Let's join in with our birthday song to wish her well.

Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday dear Jean
Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday to you
Only one will not do

Give your heart to the saviour
And then you'll have two
Happy birthday to you
From old friend and new
May God bless you and keep you
Happy birthday to you

Song: *God Always Keeps His Promises*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Oh, God, he always keeps his promises
He said the sons of Abraham
Would be more than the grains of sand
And so, his family grew
Underneath the Pharaoh's rule

Oh, God, he always keeps his promises
He said the blood upon the door
Would keep the Israelites secure
And so, he stayed his hand
And led them to the Promised Land

Chorus:

Our God is good and true
He cannot lie to me and you
We can be sure of this:
God always keeps his promises

Oh, God, he always keeps his promises
He gave us laws to be obeyed
And we broke every one he made
But when we ran from him
God said he'd take care of our sin

Chorus

Oh, God, he always keeps his promises
He said his Son would set us free
Through his death at Calvary
He suffered in our place
And then he rose up from the grave

Chorus

"God Always Keeps His Promises" words and music by Bob
Kauflin & Jon Althoff
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God's Promises – Below are five great promises of God from the Bible. Can you match up the first part of the statement on the left with the second part on the right?
(answers at the end)

The Lord watches over you...	...that enable you to share His divine nature
For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord...	...can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord
Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened...	...they are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope
For I am convinced that neither death nor life...	...the Lord is your shade at your right hand
Because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises...	...and I will give you rest

Song: *What a Faithful God Have I*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Lord, I come before your
Throne of grace
I find rest in your presence,
And fullness of joy
In worship and wonder,
I behold your face
Singing what a faithful God have I

Chorus:

What a faithful God have I
What a faithful God
What a faithful God have I
Faithful in every way

Lord of mercy, you have heard my cry
Through the storm you're the beacon
My song in the night

In the shelter of your wings
Hear my heart's reply,
Singing what a faithful God have I

Chorus

Lord, all sovereign
Granting peace from heaven
Let me comfort those who suffer
With the comfort You have given
I will tell of Your great love
For as long as I live
Singing what a faithful God have I

Chorus

"What a Faithful God Have I" words and music by Dawn Critchley
& Robert Critchley
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Bible Reading: *Galatians 3:1-25*

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain - if it really was in vain? 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?

So also Abraham 'believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness'. Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'. So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law'. Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because 'the righteous will live by faith'. The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, 'The person who does these things will live by them'. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole'. He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say 'and to seeds', meaning many people, but 'and to your seed', meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

Message: *The Greatest Message*

Imagine we are in conversation over a cup of tea/coffee and we start talking about football (humour me!) and in the heat of our discussion I happen to say “**Blackburn Rovers is the greatest football team in the world!**” Now let us also imagine that you are definitely not a BRFC supporter (humour me, again! I’ll allow you to choose another team, for the sake of argument). First thing that will no doubt strike you in response to my claim is probably, “Ashton has finally ‘flipped’, he’s ‘lost it!’” - for what a crazy thing to say. How ridiculous! But before you call 999 and get the medics in white coats to come and take me away in a straightjacket, you kindly decide that I should provide you with proof to support what is, in your mind, such an outrageous statement. I suppose my defence would have to rely on three possible lines of evidence:

1. *Present Reality* – How are BRFC doing at the moment in relation to other teams? Well, they are certainly not Liverpool FC, who are champions this season. So, enough said here!
2. *Past Record* – Equally, less said the better, though they were league champions in 1912 and 1914, champions of the Premier League in 1995, winners of the League Cup in 2002, and six-times winners of the FA Cup (1882, 1884, 1886, 1890, 1891, 1928 – nothing recent, of course!).

I suppose there is only one line of argument left to me, given most of those dates, and that is:

3. *Pioneer Role* – Was BRFC responsible for the start of the English Football League in 1888? (No, that was an Aston Villa guy, though they were one of the clubs that he contacted to help get it started). Did football itself begin in Blackburn? I’m afraid the answer is again a definite ‘No!’ It was originally a public school game.

So, unfortunately, I have to admit that my claim is nothing more than personal opinion and prejudice without any substantial evidence to back it up. And, equally, you would be in your rights to regard me as deluded – a ‘nutter’, if you want to be harsh!

If my last example involved an assertion that had little evidence to back it up, my next example is one where the evidence is so overwhelming that one would have to be foolish, if not *‘bewitched’* (or ‘brain-washed’, Galatians 3.1), to reject it. In his Letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul in effect makes the claim: **‘The gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest message in the world!’** Why? Because it is God’s greatest message to humankind. Wow! Some claim, you must admit! But can this really be true? Or, is Paul guilty of peddling his own personal opinion and prejudice as if it were the truth or fact?

But before we get to the ‘meat of the chase’, let us remind ourselves about the background to Paul’s astonishing belief, so that we are clear about the reasons why Paul writes his letter to the churches of Galatia (present day Turkey).

To begin with, people (including Christians) today often fail to realise that Christianity was originally a Jewish faith. Why? Because Jesus was Jewish, the Twelve Apostles were Jewish, the Apostle Paul (or Saul) was Jewish, and the Bible is largely Jewish. However, even though at one time Paul had been a very strict Pharisee (Jewish religious leader and teacher), until his conversion to Christ on the Road to Damascus, he now believed that the gospel-message of Jesus Christ was for the whole world,

for Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) alike, and not merely for the Jewish people. Paul believed that Jesus was (at his first coming) and will be (at his Second Coming) the complete fulfilment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah (Christ) in the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament), but sadly few of his fellow-countrymen agreed with him. They argued that the Jewish religion (Judaism) was true for all time and as a result Paul was regarded as a traitor and an enemy of his people.

Coming now to our studies in chapter 3 of Paul's Letter to the Galatians, it is clear from what he has said already in the first two chapters that there were some Jewish Christians, known as Judaisers, who were having a powerful influence at the time telling gentile people that in order to become Christians they had first to become Jews, by accepting the Law of Moses, as contained in the first five books of the Old Testament, often called the Books of Moses (or the Pentateuch). Fundamental to the Law are the rite of circumcision, the Sabbath rulings, and the food laws. They argued that you couldn't become a member of God's people, the children of Abraham, without agreeing to keep these commands of God. You see, for these Judaisers of the Gospel, the work of Jesus on the cross (his cross-work through his death and resurrection) had only abolished the many animal sacrifices for sin that are found in the Law of Moses, such as in the Book of Leviticus. And, therefore, these people believed that, in general, the message of Moses remained as important as the message of Jesus.

Even in our own times, there are many people, even within the Church, who would argue that the Gospel-message of Jesus Christ, and the Bible in general, are not enough for people to discover the truth about life and existence. They would claim that these need to be supplemented with other religious ideas and values, so that individuals can find their own meaning and purpose for living and achieve their own sense of happiness and self-fulfilment. When you hear people talking in terms of being a Christian Buddhist, or a Christian Marxist, or any other Christian 'This or That', be on your guard for it is very likely that they are mixing the message of Christ with some other philosophy and ideology, and as a result they are diluting or compromising the truth and impact of the Gospel.

But Paul was having none of it. With the full authority of God, Paul claimed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's greatest message to the world, greater than the Jewish religion of law-keeping, and indeed any religion of works. It is a message for Gentiles, as well as for Jews. It is the message of salvation through faith in Christ alone and not by keeping the works of the Law of Moses, or any other law of any other prophet! To prove the truth of his claim, the Apostle provides the evidence in our chapter this morning (Galatians 3.1-25), and his arguments can be presented by employing the three categories we used earlier – Present Reality, Past Record and Pioneer Role.

Present Reality – In verses 2-5, Paul asks these Jewish Christians (these Judaisers) whether they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, or by keeping the Law. There was only one possible answer: faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the gospel of Christ is superior to the Law of Moses, for it is through the work of Christ, especially his cross-work, that the universal gift of salvation in the Spirit has been made possible. The message of Jesus Christ is for all people everywhere – old and young, rich and poor, male and female, black and white. 'Black Lives Matter' to God, because the lives of all people, regardless of skin

colour or race, matter equally to God! There are no barriers or barricades with the gospel of Christ. He is the Saviour of the whole world, and not just one race or ethnic group, or even one gender! And to become a Christian means that a person becomes a Spirit-anointed person – i.e. a Christ-person! This means that he or she has been saved by the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the cross-work of Christ on their behalf. Hallelujah!

Past Record – Next, Paul compares the upside of the Gospel to the downside of the Law. In the passage, verses 10-14, he argues that instead of being a cause of divine blessing the Law in fact operates as a curse because those who seek to live by it will also die by it. Thus, even one breach of its commands means that a person stands under its condemnation, both in this life and the life to come, for to be good most of the time is not good enough – a person must be good all of the time! But, sadly, we are all sinners in thought, word and deed. There are hundreds of spiritual and moral commands in the Law of Moses, such as the Ten Commandments, but the chief ones are the Two Great Commandments: ‘Love the LORD your God with your whole being’ and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. Who can honestly say they have kept these commandments at all times? So, none of us can therefore be justified by the Law, because we have all been ‘weighed in the balances’ of God’s righteousness, as demanded by the Law, and been found wanting. Or, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Church at Rome: *‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’* (Romans 3.23). We are all sinners by nature and by practice, and therefore we deserve to come under the righteous judgement of God.

Compare this situation with UK law, and let us say I have been caught speeding by a roadside camera and as a result I been summoned to appear at the local court of law before a magistrate. There would be no point in arguing that I’ve only broken the law on this one occasion, because I’m sure the officer would in response argue something to the effect that I have still broken the law of the land and as a consequence punishment is deserved and justice must be served. Similarly, the failure to keep only one of the laws of Moses is to break the whole Law of God, which means I stand before God as a sinner.

So, why did God give the Law to his people, if it is impossible for humans like you and me to keep it? In the last section of our reading (3.19-25), Paul explains the purpose of the Law. It was given by God as a spiritual guide and moral guard for his people, to tutor them in the standards of righteousness that God expects of them, and the whole world. It shows clearly that the only remedy for sin and disobedience is through the appropriate offering for sin and trusting in the loving-kindness and gracious forgiveness of God, and not merely by trying to please him by being good keepers of the Law. Indeed, God himself promised to come in the form of his Son (Isaiah 9.6-7) to fulfil the commands of the Law and to provide a once-for-all offering for sin in conformity with its righteous demands (Isaiah 53). So, in the words of Paul in verse 24: *‘the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.’*

The incredible truth of the Gospel is that although Jesus kept the Law of Moses perfectly and was sinless, he became, as Paul argues in this chapter, a ‘curse’ for every one of us by dying on a cross. In other words, he suffered the punishment that my sin deserved. He became my Saviour. His death made atonement for my sin and your sin. As the Apostle puts it in his letter to the Christians at Rome: *‘For the wages*

of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6.23). Because Jesus suffered in our place, we can know peace (we can be 'at-one') with God through his death. We can know with absolute conviction his forgiveness and salvation through the Spirit of the Risen and Exalted Christ. The only thing we have to do is to put our trust in Christ, to have faith in him and what he did for us on the cross, and to place our lives into his care and keeping. He calls us to become, like Jesus, a child of God – one of the children of faith and therefore one of the true Children of Abraham (Galatians 3.29).

Once again, the Gospel-message of Jesus Christ is far superior to the Law-message of Moses, for the Law of God condemns us but the Gospel of the Grace of God sets us free from all condemnation. I know which I prefer! That is why I am a sinner who has been forgiven and saved by the grace of God, for many years ago I, too, trusted in Jesus for my salvation. And so, *'the (Gospel) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death'* (Romans 8.2). That is why I know I have eternal life, so that when I die I will go to be with Jesus, my Saviour and Friend. Is this your experience? I hope it is, but if not, then trust in Jesus and he will also save (forgive) you, regardless of who you are and what you have done!

Pioneer Role – In a good half of chapter three, Paul considers the great pioneer of the gospel of saving faith – Abraham. All Jewish people regard Abraham, not Moses, as the father of the chosen people of God. He was always (and still is) the great hero of Israel. And it is to the role of Abraham in the divine plan of salvation that Paul appeals in the third of his proofs that the Gospel of Christ is God's greatest message to all people.

Abraham's relationship with God was based entirely on God's grace, because God chose him to be the father of a great people, the founder of a great nation and the fount and exemplar of a great faith. You see, we are told in Genesis that Abraham and Sarah, who lived in Ur of Chaldea (present day Iraq), were desperate to have children and a male descendant but sadly reached their older years childless. One day God spoke to Abraham and made a covenant (or agreement) with him, which promised him a family. But their acceptance of this covenant meant that Abraham and Sarah had to leave their comfortable existence and go and live in the wasteland of Canaan – the Promised Land. Eventually, Abraham and Sarah had a male child (Isaac) in their old age, well beyond the years of child-bearing for Sarah, as a miraculous sign of God's saving will for humankind. We are told that Abraham's faith in God was *'accounted to him as righteousness'* (3.6). Although Abraham was far from perfect – some of his failings are clearly set out for us in Genesis – he was justified by his faith and became a true *'friend of God'* (James 2.23).

And yet, although the Jewish people accepted this account of the life of Abraham, they failed to appreciate that Abraham lived 430 years before Moses and the gift of the Law (3.17). So Paul argues that the gospel of the grace of God lay at the heart of the Abrahamic covenant, which ultimately promised the coming of a 'Seed', a descendant who would be a great blessing to his people and the whole world. This blessing was indeed Jesus Christ, the Son of God, a true son of Abraham, and the Saviour of the world. And therefore, all who have faith in God, like Abraham, are the recipients of the blessings that were promised in the covenant, and therefore Gentiles as well as Jews – indeed, anyone of whatever race or background – can become

children of God, and indeed friends of God through faith in Christ, the true Seed of Abraham.

Thus again, Paul proves convincingly that the gospel of Christ far exceeds the Law of Moses in greatness and glory. Salvation is only in Christ, for as the Apostle states in the very last verse of chapter 2, *'if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain'* (2.21). That is why all people who adopt a works-based, 'I'll do my best' approach to getting to heaven – and this is very common these days – fail to appreciate that salvation does not come that cheaply or easily, for as the Old Testament states: *'the redemption of their souls is costly...that they should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit'* (Psalms 49.8-9). Where do you stand in relation to the gospel of Christ, the message of salvation? Are you trusting in your own good works, or in the good work of the cross that Jesus did on your behalf? If you are relying on your own goodness, rather than the goodness and grace of Jesus, then I pray that God will do a mighty work of faith in you this day, for his name's sake. Amen.

Song: Lord, I Lift Your Name on High

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Lord I lift your name on high
Lord I love to sing your praises
I'm so glad you're in my life
I'm so glad you came to save us

You came from heaven to earth
To show the way
From the earth to the cross

My debt to pay
From the cross to the grave
From the grave to the sky
Lord I lift your name on high

"Lord I Lift Your Name on High" words and music by Rick
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Prayers

We thank you, Lord, for the medium of prayer, that we are able to bring our worries and concerns before you, knowing that you have a fatherly interest in everything that we think and feel. In these Covid-19 days we pray for those who are still suffering from the effects of the virus and for those families who are grieving for the loss of loved ones. May they come to realise, even if it is for the first time, that you are a God of all comfort who longs to share our trials and tribulations with us and who lifts our spirits through your all-embracing and saving love.

We pray for those of our fellowship who have found the lockdown a difficult experience, because it has been so isolating and worrying. But we thank you that through the various mediums of technology we have been able to keep in contact with each other and to offer support and strength. As the Deacons consider the steps to be taken in order to restart our Sunday services in a safe and yet spiritually fulfilling manner, we pray that you will guide them in the decisions they should make. Also, we look to you for the plans that should be put in place for the future outreach and work of our fellowship, so that your name will be honoured and glorified and your kingdom extended in Blackburn and the Galligreaves area.

We pray for those of our fellowship who are ill at this time, those who are in pain, those who are waiting for hospital appointments and treatment, those who are in care homes, and those who are concerned for the relatives of family and friends who are

fearful for the future because of the threat of unemployment and the uncertain economic situation. Lord, be near to them at this time, we pray, so that they may know that the way ahead in your purposes are never uncertain. Bless Alec and his family as they enjoy their reunion together in Germany for the first time for many months.

We pray earnestly for our fellow-believers throughout the world who are suffering for bearing and witnessing to the name of Christ. Lord, we lift them up before you this morning and pray that you may bless them in such a way that their lives will glow before their enemies with the light of the glory of Christ, so that the gospel will prevail and be victorious in these lands. We also pray that you will bless our BMS World Vision partners, Brian and Jackie Chilvers, as they prepare in France for their medical and gospel mission to Chad. Amen.

The Life of John Newton (1725-1807)

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen to a video, or read the following account)

In recent weeks, we have seen protests in this country by the Black Lives Matter movement, following the brutal killing in America of George Floyd by a policeman. We have seen the statues of former slave-traders, like that of Edward Colston in Bristol, being pulled down. John Newton was at one time also a slave-trader until his conversion to Christ in a terrible storm and later looked back on these times with horror. In 1787 Newton wrote an account of his slave-trading to help William Wilberforce's campaign to end the practice – 'a business at which my heart now shudders,' he wrote. Recollection of that chapter in his life never left him, and for him becoming a Christian was truly an act of God's amazing grace. Following his conversion, he eventually left the navy and became a church minister and wrote many hymns which are still sung in churches to this day, the most famous one being Amazing Grace.

Song: Amazing Grace

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

The Lord hath promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for ever more. Amen.

Answers to the 'Promises of God'

Psalm 121:5	The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand
Jeremiah 29:11	For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord; they are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope
Matthew 11:28	Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest
Romans 8:38-39	For I am convinced that neither death nor life... can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord
2 Peter 1:4	Because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises... that enable you to share His divine nature