

Blackburn Baptist Church Virtual Service, 28 June 2020



Welcome

You're very welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church for our 'virtual' service for today.

Song: *Christ Liveth in Me*

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

Once far from God and dead in sin
No light my heart could see
But in God's word the light I found
Now Christ liveth in me

Chorus:

Christ liveth in me
Christ liveth in me
Oh, what a salvation this
That Christ liveth in me

As rays of light from yonder sun
The flowers of earth set free
So life and light and love come forth
From Christ living in me

Chorus

As lives the flower within the seed
As in the cone the tree
So, praise the Christ of truth and grace
His Spirit dwelleth in me

Chorus

With longing all my heart is filled
That like him I may be
As on the wondrous thought I dwell
That Christ liveth in me

Chorus

Opening Prayer

Father God, we thank you for the amazing truth reflected in our opening song that, when we put our trust in Christ through faith, he comes to live within us through his Holy Spirit, guiding, leading and changing us day by day to be more like him. Truly, what a salvation is this, beyond anything that we deserve or could imagine. Forgive us when we take what you have done for us for granted. Please help us in our service today, that the truth of your Word and its implications will sink deep into our hearts and lives. Amen.

Song: *Yet Not I, but Through Christ in Me*

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

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy my righteousness and freedom
My steadfast love
My deep and boundless peace

To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to his
Oh how strange and divine
I can sing: all is mine
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side the Saviour he will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need his power is displayed

To this I hold: my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley he will lead
Oh the night has been won
And I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And he was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold: my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released
I can sing: I am free
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For he has said that he will bring me home

And day by day I know he will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to him
When the race is complete
Still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

"Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me" words & music by Jonny Robinson, Michael Farren and Rich Thompson.
© 2018 City Alight Music.
CCLI License No. 5664

Meditation

Beryl Fish would like to encourage us once again with her readings, 'Jesus Calling'. Beryl also has a few personal words: "I have been uplifted by the numbers of our church family who have told me they are finding the 'Jesus Calling' words and Bible messages in our virtual service both inspiring and helpful. Several have now got their own copies! I pray that the words will bless them as they have blessed me. I thank God for leading me to share these amazing readings."

"Rest in me, my child. Give your mind a break from planning and trying to anticipate what will happen. Pray continually, asking my Spirit to take charge of the details of your day. Remember that you are on a journey with me. When you try to peer into the future and plan for every possibility, you ignore your constant companion, who sustains you moment by moment. As you gaze anxiously into the distance, you don't even feel the strong grip of my hand holding yours. How foolish you are, my child! Remembrance of me is a daily discipline. Never lose sight of my presence with you. This will keep you resting in me. All day and every day."

Pray continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139:9-10)

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall not be shaken. (Psalm 62:5-6)

Three Minute Theology – 'Clean Slate'

In the 2012 movie 'Batman Returns', one of Cat Woman's driving motivations was her desire for a clean slate. As you might imagine, she has a pretty sordid history as an international cat-burglar, and, like all of us in the age of social media, every detail of her past is on record somewhere on the world-wide-web, making it impossible for her to escape the past. But word on the streets of Gotham is that someone has developed a powerful computer programme called 'The Clean Slate' which will erase your entire internet record from every database on the planet, all with the simple click of a single button. And for reasons that are perhaps obvious, Cat Woman would do anything to get her hands on it. In this respect, Cat Woman is more than just a comic-book super-villain, she is also a metaphor for us all. At least, the way data about us accumulates on the internet until it starts to define us and control us, is one of the

growing social issues of our day. Harvard professor, Jonathan Zittrain, uses the term 'reputational bankruptcy' to talk about all this. The web never forgets, he reminds us, and as more and more of our lives are lived online, it becomes increasingly difficult to escape the impact of our digital footprints. "What we need," Zittrain argues, "is some way to declare 'reputation bankruptcy' and start over. Like, if the internet allowed you a one-time pulling of a lever that would delete your digital identity and you could just start fresh."

The concept of 'reputational bankruptcy' is a helpful image for something the Bible calls 'justification by faith'. The idea is that we are justified before God not by works - keeping the Old Testament Law or adhering to some human-defined moral code - but through faith in Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking, the term 'justification' is a legal term that describes a judge rendering a not-guilty verdict in a court of law. To be justified is to be declared 'not guilty'. But what, exactly, does this mean? How does God declare us 'not guilty' on the basis of our faith in Christ, and what does this justification actually look like for us in real life?

Well, this is where the 'Clean Slate' comes in handy. Because in the same way that all the digital data that's accumulated about us on the internet has all sorts of implications for our present - impacting our ability to get a job, to secure a bank-loan, to get a date, and so on - so much so that our digital identity can come to define us in all sorts of unhealthy ways - so too with sin. Biblically, sin is not just about the moral failings of the past that need forgiveness, it is also about how these moral failings define us and have all sorts of implications for our present: our ability to serve God, our ability to commune with him, our ability to take our place as one of his people. We don't just need forgiveness, we need a brand new spiritual identity. And 'justification by faith' is for our spiritual identities, what the 'Clean Slate' is to our digital identities.

On the cross, Christ stands in our place as our fully-human representative and through his own death, he puts to death the entire sin-record of our lives - 'he cancelled the accusation that stood against us' is how the Bible puts it, 'nailing it to the cross.' Through his own death, he wipes the slate clean, and then, through his resurrection on the other side, he offers us a brand-new identity to live, united with his resurrected life. In a very real way, putting our faith in Christ is like declaring 'reputational bankruptcy' and so allowing God to 'justify' us - to wipe the record clean so that Christ's identity can now define us. And, like it says in one place, 'having been justified like this through faith, we now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Song: *It Is No Longer I That Liveth*

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

It's no longer I that liveth
But Christ that liveth in me
It's no longer I that liveth
But Christ that liveth in me.

He lives, He lives
Jesus is alive in me!
It's no longer I that liveth
But Christ that liveth in me

"It is No Longer I That Liveth" words and music by Sally Ellis.
© 1980 Thankyou Music
CCLI License No. 5664.

Bible Reading: *Galatians 2:11 – 21*

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? "We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. "But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Message: *Orthodox Stance*

We come today to what is probably one of the most tense and dramatic episodes in the New Testament. Here are two leading apostles of Jesus Christ face to face in complete and open conflict. When Paul visited Jerusalem, Peter (together with James and John) gave him the right hand of fellowship (verses 1-10). When Peter visited Antioch, Paul opposed him to his face (verses 11-16). He adopted an orthodox stance and gave him so to speak an orthodox right hand. So where was the fellowship in that? What happened there? This exchange between Peter and Paul shows us what happens when the gospel culture we're creating goes against the gospel doctrine we proclaim. It is possible, so to speak, to unsay or undo with our actions what we say with our mouths. It's common, and every time it happens it's a disappointment to those around us. But inside the church, it's more than a disappointment. It's a denial of the good news. It makes a mockery of the work of Jesus Christ.

So maybe someone comes up to me and says, "I cannot hear what you are saying because your life is speaking too loudly." It would be equally tragic, wouldn't it, to exclaim, "Don't do as I do, do what I say." That would be hypocritical wouldn't it? 'Hypocrite' comes from the Greek word 'hypokrites', which means 'an actor'. The Greek word took on an extended meaning to refer to any person who was wearing a figurative mask and pretending to be someone or something they were not. Are we who we say we are? Are we who we claim to be? Are we genuine? Are we authentic? Are we real?

In Galatians 2:13-14 we read: 'The other Jews joined (Peter) in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" Many early church writers claim this was not a real fight. But Augustine interpreted the story as a genuine conflict in which Paul established the higher claim of the truth of the gospel over the rank and office of Peter. Yes, it was a real battle of the giants of the early church. Paul opposes Peter to his face. It wasn't that Peter was merely following a personal preference. No, Peter was giving the non-Jews in Antioch notice that they could not be set right with God unless they were to abstain from certain foods. He was adding law on top of grace, which wiped out grace entirely. Peter wasn't just mistaken. He was completely out of step with the truth of the gospel. As Paul writes, 'When I saw that they were not acting in line with the gospel.' Peter was out of line.

Peter should have known better. In Acts 10, he received a vision in which he was commanded to rise, kill, and eat all kinds of animals. He didn't understand it at first, but God told him that what he had made clean, he should not call common. According to the Law of Moses, certain animals were unclean, not to be eaten. But through Christ, God had freed his people from the law. Peter understood when, at the same time, men sent by Cornelius, a non-Jew, came and asked him to come to their city. Peter went proclaiming, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34-35). God used animals to reveal to Peter that non-Jews are acceptable. Peter believed non-Jews were animals, but God says they are his children now. Peter's racism ran deep. It took nothing less than a vision from God to break the pre-recorded tapes filling and dominating his mind. But that recorded story still lived on in Peter's mind. He had downloaded it onto his hard-disk drive. So, when Peter was in mixed company in Galatia, he chose the path of least resistance to his own heart. He chose to separate himself from the non-Jews in favour of the Jews. He knew the non-Jews were accepted by God as they were. They did not have to become Jews to become Christians any more than Peter had to become a Jew to become a Christian. But what Peter knew didn't stop him from acting on the basis of what he felt.

As you probably know, self-justification describes how, when a person encounters cognitive dissonance or a situation in which a person's behaviour is inconsistent with their beliefs, that person tends to justify the behaviour and deny any negative feedback associated with the behaviour. Peter maybe could justify his own behaviour to himself. He probably had an excuse. If Peter expressed his own reason for separating from the non-Jews in Antioch, he may well have voiced his concern about the detrimental effect his eating with non-Jews had on the Jerusalem church's mission to the Jews. When non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem heard that Peter, a prominent church leader, an Apostle, was eating with non-Jews in Antioch, they would not only turn away from the witness of the church but also become actively hostile toward the church for tolerating such a practice. Confronted by these practical concerns for his home church and its mission to the Jews, Peter acted against his own better judgment. He separated himself from the non-Jews. This action was inconsistent with his own convictions about the truth of the gospel. He was more

influenced by his common racial identity as a Jew than by his new experience of unity in Christ with all believers of every race.

Even Barnabas was led astray. Barnabas, as the first pastor of the church in Antioch, had warmly welcomed non-Jewish believers. He had worked alongside Paul in that church and in their mission of planting non-Jewish churches in Galatia. Peter was probably thinking, "Well, let's not take the grace of God too far. And who am I to offend these people from Jerusalem? Their feelings matter too. So we should probably take the gradual approach. Yes, the gradual approach will avoid controversy. We'll meet in the middle somewhere. And this whole thing will blow over." In other words, Peter chose not to keep in step with the gospel but to walk in step with the legalists. But he had no right to settle for that false peace. What was at stake here was not a matter of degree or process or nuance. What was at stake here was the same thing at stake in every church all the time.

Here it is: Who is an insider, and who is an outsider, and on what basis can we rightly distinguish one from the other? It's a simple question. It's not a matter of compromise. It's an either/or. Either the non-Jews were insiders, or they were outsiders. It couldn't be a little bit of both, with one foot in and the other foot out. Who is a legitimately a member of the Body of Christ? What is it that makes a fully approved member of the Body of Christ? Paul answered that question by looking at Jesus. What does his gospel say? Justification by faith alone clearly says that the blood of Jesus is enough to make anyone an insider. If you have put your sins onto Christ crucified, you're clean, and you belong. If you belong to Jesus, you belong to the church, no matter what your background might be, whatever your culture or your ethnicity or your politics or any other human identity. You might or might not be mature. You may or may not be ready for leadership. But Jesus says you belong, whoever you are. If you come to Jesus with the empty hands of faith, he receives you, and so do we. We come to the Lord in faith. We grow in our relationship to the Lord by faith. We live with the Lord by faith. The method, the way is always the same. The approach is the same. The means is the same.

Supposing I need to do some ironing. I set up the ironing board, collect the dried washing and get the iron. I have an electric iron, so I put the plug in the socket and switch it on. Then I iron. Supposing I have to break off when somebody calls, then I would switch off and disconnect the iron from the mains. Eventually I can restart. Supposing I use all my strength as I try to put pressure on the iron to smooth the linen bedclothes, to do a good job on my shirts. But if I do not connect to the socket it is going to look really funny, isn't it! I started with connecting to the mains last time - then that is what I should do again. The electric iron needs external power, external warmth and light to be a useful tool.

Or think about this. Jonny and Nigel show me how the Manse lawnmower works. Take it out of the garage, bring it to the lawn, check the fuel, the choke and then pull and the motor starts. So I am through quickly with the smaller front lawn and decide to go to the larger back lawn which resembled at that time something rather different from a lawn. So what do I do? Do I decide to push the lawnmower as hard as I can? No. I started using the lawnmower in the front by checking the fuel, using the choke

and pulling the cable. Why should I try using all my massive strength to cut the grass by force? Even if it doesn't look like the lawnmower will fix the lawn which is now looking more like a harvest field. Have you got it? About the harvest field?

So it is with Jesus. We get to know him through faith, we accept him through faith and we live daily by faith. If I became a Christian yesterday by faith should I get up today and do it differently? Should I get up today and do it my way? By grace through faith. Not by race but by grace. Not by education or by political allegiance but by grace. Not by religious observance. But by grace. Not by attending every meeting of the church. Not by being a respectable member of the community. Not by donations to charitable causes. Not by serving as a magistrate. Only by grace through faith. God's grace to us through faith. And even this faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.

Being born a Jew provided certain benefits and privileges. Peter and Paul were born into the family of God. They didn't have to wait to hear God's word. It was spoken over them at birth. As they grew, they learned the Law. They were taught what is clean and what is unclean. They were brought up in the community of God's chosen people. But they knew that wasn't what saved them. Jesus Christ saved them. It wasn't their obedience to the law. It was Christ's. Since Jesus made these Jews righteous by faith, the same remedy would cure the non-Jew sinners. In these two verses, Paul sets the false teachers' doctrine of justification by works against the gospel's doctrine of justification by faith.

Peter's actions denied the truth of the gospel. He knew everyone is made righteous based on Christ's finished work, but he acted as if it was the law that set one right with God. That's why Paul launches into a heavily doctrinal section from verse 15. What we believe must determine how we act, and when we act out of step from what we believe, we need to circle back to that belief and reinforce it.

Peter's response to the delegation from Jerusalem and his withdrawal from the integrated fellowship of the church has been exonerated by some who think he was appropriately sensitive to the demands of his own mission to the Jews and was simply accommodating himself to those he was trying to win to Christ. If Paul himself could 'become all things to all men' to win some to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-22), then why was it wrong for Peter to follow the same principle of accommodation when he adapted himself to the preferences and sensitivities of his home church? From Paul's perspective, however, Peter's action was not accommodation for the sake of the gospel; it was compromise of the essential truth of the gospel. And, on that basis, Paul was willing to confront Peter with the inconsistency and hypocrisy of his actions. This confrontation was not just a power struggle to see who would maintain control of the church. Paul did not assert his authority as an apostle directly appointed by Jesus Christ or as one of the senior leaders of the church in Antioch. Nor did he appeal to the authority of the decision of the Jerusalem conference (verses 7-9). Paul's refusal to follow Peter's example as all the other Jewish Christians did and his open rebuke of Peter were based solely on the standard set by the gospel.

Paul saw that strenuous action was necessary to counteract a drift which had occurred. He did not wait; he struck. It made no difference to him that this drift was

connected with the name and conduct of Peter. It was wrong and that was all that mattered to him. A famous name can never justify an infamous action. Paul made 'nails with heads'. This is a German expression and its translation of 'machte Nägel mit Köpfen'. It means to do things right, straight and with 100% commitment. Paul did not mess around.

Luther came to understand justification as being entirely the work of God. "That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfils the law," said Luther. "Faith is that which brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ". Maybe you say, "I know that already". Or maybe you are thinking, "Why are we spending so much time looking at Paul's theological observations and battles with other leading church figures in these messages on Galatians?" Let me tell you. The reason is simple. It is because, if we do not grasp this, we have missed the main point. It is the issue we must get right to understand the heart of God.

So Paul goes on a bit now about not being justified by law and being justified alone through faith in Christ. In fact he repeats himself several times from verse 15 onwards. Again and again and again and again, he says more or less the same thing. Why? Because it is so basic, so central, so critical not only to our understanding of salvation, but to our being saved. Because we are often in danger of forgetting it. The trouble with learning the 'ABC' of the gospel may be that when we have got to 'H' or maybe to 'L' we tend to forget 'A'. We think we know it all. Because we dart off so quickly on a performance-orientated self-centred salvation strategy. We look to ourselves, change lanes and forget that at the important crossroads ahead we will be sent in the wrong direction. Two weeks before I arrived in Blackburn, electronic warning signs triggered by vehicles driving the wrong way onto motorways started being trialled in Scotland following a series of fatal crashes in East and West Lothian. They must have known I was coming. How easy it is to go in the wrong direction. Let this message be a clear warning sign to all of us to live by faith and not by works.

We come finally to Galatians 2:20: 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' I hear you thinking that sounds like maybe I lose my personal identity. But that could not be further from the new normal; that could not be more distant from the new reality; that could not be more different from the truth which we experience when we come to know the Lord. We are then out of lockdown. We are then free. In him. The distance has gone. For he is then living in us, in you and me. Our digital identity comes to define us in so many ways. So it is also with sin. It defines our nature, our character, our very personality. Our ability to serve God, our ability to listen and talk with him, our ability to take our place as one of His people. These abilities disappeared when we went against God. Completely. We don't just need forgiveness; we need a brand-new spiritual identity. He gives us a brand-new identity united with Jesus' resurrected life. 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV).

It is a very old story, but it is still a helpful illustration. Two men stand at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, London, looking at a dishevelled, poorly-dressed man. The

first stands up and says to the assembled crowd, "If this man joins the communist movement, I will put new clothes on him from head to toe." The second stands up and says clearly, "If this man gives his life back to Jesus Christ, God will put a new man in these clothes." 'Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.' (John 14:19 NIV)

I would expect you have been following the theme of the hymns and worship songs this morning. Our opening hymn was, 'Christ lives in me'. Our second was 'Yet not I but through Christ in me'. Our third was 'It's no longer I that live' and our fourth after this message will be 'See the light', where we will hear and see the same message very loud and very clear, a joyful, a jubilant, a victorious celebration of Christ living in us.

Paul's orthodox right hand did not knock Peter out. I don't even think it knocked him down. Paul was by all accounts a slightly-built man who would have had more than a little difficulty with Tyson Fury or Anthony Joshua. His right hand was orthodox in the sense that it came from the right to stand up for the truth of the gospel. That is the orthodox stance. That is our message this morning.

Song: See the Light

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

Arise my soul
Remember this
He took my sin
And he buried it

Chorus:

No longer I who live
Now Jesus lives in me
For I was dead in sin
But I woke up to see the light

No I won't boast
But in the cross
That saved my soul
All else is loss

The grip of fear
Has no hold on me
So where, oh death
Where is your sting?

Chorus

All, all of this for your glory

Chorus

All, all of this for your glory

"See the Light" words and music by Ben Fielding & Reuben Morgan.
© 2019 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia
CCLI License No. 5664.

Prayers for Others

Thank God for his continued gifts and our ability to keep in contact with each other in different ways during the last few months. Bring to God worries about coming out of lockdown, pray for those with responsibility for this, those afraid of this and the ones who don't stick to the rules. Pray for doctors and scientists seeking new treatment and vaccination. Ask God to care for countries still badly affected by the virus and those unable to slow the spread by distancing because of circumstances.

Bring before God those mourning loss, remembering recent stabbings and the terrible road accident and those still ill with the virus. Give thanks for those recovered. Pray for those with problems with income and pray for an economic upturn and

success of ongoing Brexit negotiations. Remember the ones who are ill in our fellowship and pray for support and healing and for the NHS to return to normal caring. Ask for God's help with children still at home, and families having problems and pray for a successful return to school and safety for teachers.

Remember our Pastor and Deacons and pray for Alec's visit to Germany and care for his family. Ask for God's help with Christian outreach in the world, and within our local area and our outreach when we get back to normal. Pray for forgiveness for our sins and as we rededicate ourselves and offer our prayers to God.

Hebrew Blessing

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

The LORD bless you and keep you
Make his face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The LORD turn his face toward you
And give you peace

May his favour be upon you
To a thousand generations
Your family and your children
Your generations after you

May his presence go before you
Beside you and behind you
All around you and within you
He is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your going and your coming
In your weeping and rejoicing
He is for you, he is for us
He is with us, he is for you
Shalom

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 and forever more. Amen