

# ABBEY BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

10.30 am 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2025

**Pauline Mbukwa leading and Jill Bird preaching**

[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk) Facebook @ Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



## **Coping with life's difficulties with faith**

### **A Call to Worship**

Oh Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens.  
**We praise you, God, for there is none like you.**

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, I will recount all your wonderful deeds.  
**I will praise your holy name, O Most High, Hallelujah and Amen.**

**Loving and gracious God,  
forgive us when we see defeat and you see possibility,  
when we lose hope and you see a bright future,  
forgive us for losing faith when you remain faithful.**

### **Song: Great is Thy faithfulness**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
There is no shadow of Turning with Thee;  
Thou changes not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

#### Chorus

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.

Pardon for sin and A peace that endures  
Thine own dear presence. To cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and Bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, With ten thousand beside!

## Family Time: Faith that endures

Job lost everything, his family, his property, but he still praised God and said Blessed be your name/ As we are going through different challenges, let us call upon God and say with faith, blessed be your name.

**Song: Blessèd be your name**      *During the singing of this hymn, our offering will be taken*

Blessèd Be Your Name in the land that is plentiful,  
Where Your streams of abundance flow, Blessèd be Your name.

Blessèd Be Your name, when I'm found in the desert place,  
Though I walk through the wilderness, Blessèd Be Your name.

Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to praise.  
When the darkness closes in, Lord, Still I will say

Blessèd be the name of the Lord, Blessèd be Your name.  
Blessèd be the name of the Lord, Blessèd be Your glorious name.

Blessèd be Your name when the sun's shining down on me,  
When the world's all as it should be. Blessèd be Your name.

Blessèd be Your name on the road marked with suffering,  
Though there's pain in the offering, Blessèd be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord, Still I will say

Blessèd be the name of the Lord, Blessèd be Your name.  
Blessèd be the name of the Lord, Blessèd be Your glorious name.

You give and take away, You give and take away,  
My heart will choose to say Lord, blessèd be Your name.

Matt Redman Blessèd Be Your Name lyrics © Thankyou Music, Thank You Music Ltd.

Young people leave for their groups

1<sup>st</sup> Bible Reading      1 James 1: 1-13

2<sup>nd</sup> Bible Reading:      Hebrews 12:1-13

**Sermon To become like Jesus 1 – How do we cope when the going gets tough? James 1.2-7**

What is God's big plan for our lives? and what a big plan it is!! It's to become mature, complete, not lacking anything and attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ Eph 4

We are going to be looking today at the main way God does this and it may be a surprise to you!

It's definitely a process and takes all our lives. In 2 Corinthians it says, 'We are being transformed from one degree of glory to another', What a goal! Are you more like Jesus than you were a year ago??

**So what can we learn from James about this process?**

He is a preacher and starts with a statement to wake everyone up!! **He says we are to count it all joy when we have difficulties, trials and temptations** – we didn't expect that did we!

But why? That is madness. What does it say?

**Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.**

As we let God work through these trials with us, we develop perseverance, patience, endurance, greater faith and trust in our Father God. The result - we become mature, and more and more like JESUS. What an upside-down world we are called into. The world around us says more money, success, security, good things happening will make us complete, lacking nothing!

The bible says just the opposite and it is talking reality

**1 Peter 1. 6 says we may have to go through all sorts of grief and difficulty that our faith, more precious than gold, will be proved genuine and give praise and glory to Jesus.**

But God isn't there an easier way to be like JESUS? To get through life and reach the finishing line? Do you ever say 'Where are you God?', when life's trials seem chaotic and meaningless?

What has been difficult for you this last week? For some there has been great difficulty – sickness, very bad news and huge fear for our loved ones at home, home office interviews and waiting outcomes, landlord eviction – for others frustration – car breaking down, family arguments.

What else? How did you react? Is it possible to count it all joy?

Let's stop and think for a moment of our present difficulties and how we are responding.

What do the next verses say? **If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him.**

What is this wisdom that God wants to give us so freely. We need to understand our trials from God's point of view? It is taking time when these difficulties come to withdraw into God's presence and seek his perspective and opinion on what is going on. We need to find his wisdom. What may we learn as we spend time sitting with him. Why have these trials come and how do we respond?

We live in a sinful world – still ruled by Satan.

We live in a sinful world where other people are doing sinful things that affect us?

We are still sinful and broken and can make choices that bring difficult times into our lives?

Maybe all these are at work in your trial – ask God about it to understand what is going on and how to respond and pray. It is going up into heaven and chatting it out with God and asking what is really going on. But remind yourself that God is still in control and can work it for good in our walk towards maturity. He is always a good and loving Father, always there to help us. He can be deeply trusted and holding his hand is the safest place to be. As I look around the room, I am so proud of many of you as you walk this journey of faith through such difficult circumstances

So what are the ways we can respond when difficulties come? **How can we grow in faith?**

To me the simplest definition of faith is **Feeling Afraid I Trust Him.**

James goes on to describe those with little trust in God. **He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the sea. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. He is double minded, unstable in all his ways.** Another of James very blunt statements!

So how can we stop being tossed about and have a more stable place on a rock to stand?

1. I suggest first we **remember**. Where have you seen God at work in the past? God so often in the bible tells his people to remember. The Israelites were instructed to sit and remind each other of God's faithfulness as he took them safely through the desert and into the promised land. They were to tell the stories to their children, so their children would learn to trust God through difficulties.

We sung in our first hymn 'Great is thy faithfulness' – as thou has been you forever will be. God doesn't change. He has promised to be with us to the very end of the age. So when difficulties come remind yourself of God's faithful character and his faithfulness to you in the past and be thankful. Maybe you didn't ask then for God's wisdom to understand that trial and God is asking you to spend time with him now.

2. Then ask yourself **Am I double minded**, having two alternating ways of coping with life. We have the expression double-minded again in James 4.8. Here it describes a man who one day tries to 'love the world' or rely on the things in the world such as money, human wisdom and security or even plain worrying to get him through difficult times, but the next day alternates with trusting God to help.

Is God asking for a more complete surrender of trust. Pauline reminded us of Job. He had a huge lesson to learn as God took him through a very severe trial of loss of family, home and even his own health. Job came to a deep point of surrender and could even say 'whatever happens even if I die, I will still trust you God'

3. Then thirdly **Am I drawing nearer to my loving heavenly Father?**

2 Corinthians says '**The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, comforts us in all our troubles – as the sufferings overflow, so does the comfort.** I ask myself when have I most known Gods close loving presence – it has been in difficult times. My Father died very suddenly when I was in my 20's. I was left with a dependent family to look after as well as the loss of a dear parent – but God my Father was such a real presence. Many of you will know the poem Footsteps – looking at the journey of our life and seeing Jesus carrying us through the most difficult times

### **So what are we learning this morning?**

There will be difficulties and trials – we have to walk through them to the finishing line

God is asking for a closer walk with him, where we ask for wisdom in these trials

He is challenging us about being double minded – not totally trusting in him alone.

What's the goal – becoming more mature – more and more like Jesus

The book of Hebrews was written to a similar audience – those going through extreme trials. It concludes Ch 12 with **Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.** We do it together helping each other along with eyes fixed on Jesus. This is our finishing point, our place of deeper trust and love. God offers a place of deep peace and joy as we 'fix our eyes fully on Jesus'

Who this morning is so weary with waiting for the trial to be over? So exhausted with always being worried? Can we stand with you and run the race together as we finish.

God I look to you – I won't be overwhelmed. Give me wisdom to see things like you do.

God I look to you – you're where my help comes from. Give me wisdom you know just what to do.

### **Song: Turn your eyes upon Jesus**

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.

Fix your eyes upon Jesus,  
Let nobody else take his place;  
And then hour by hour you will know his power  
Until at last you have run the great race.

## **Song: Father God, I wonder**

Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist  
without the knowledge of Your Fatherhood and your loving care  
But now I am Your child I am adopted in Your family  
And I will never be alone because Father God You're here beside me  
I will sing Your Praises (3x) Forevermore  
I will sing Your Praises (3x) Forevermore

1984 thankyou music

## **Prayers of Intercession – John**

Father God, we come to you with the prayer that "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). We are encouraged to pray for your will and purpose to be fulfilled. We ask for wisdom to know how to pray for what we see happening in the world right now. As James 1:5 says: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all..."

We see the events unfolding in the Middle East and we can despair at the hatred, destruction and the loss of life. We are reminded that we should not be anxious about anything, but to present our requests to God. Then God's peace will guard our hearts (Philippians 4:6-7). Jesus said that there will be wars and rumours of war, but the end is not yet. We are encouraged to lift our heads to the Lord and to wait for his return.

So today we do pray specifically for Iran and Israel... (additional prayers)

We thank you Lord that you are our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). Help us to renew our confidence in you as our God who is in control and may we be strengthened in faith. May your Spirit bear fruit in us and fill us with your love for one another. May your love overcome our fear in these troubled days.

We ask these things in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

When life goes through twists and turns and it feels like there is no God, remind yourself of what he managed to do for you in the past, the victories you had, he is still the same God, who remains faithful, so let us finish our service by this song the goodness of God.

### **Song: Goodness of God**

I love You, Lord For Your mercy never fails me  
All my days, I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up Until I lay my head  
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

Because all my life You have been faithful And all my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able, Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice You have led me through the fire  
In darkest night You are close like no other  
I've known You as a Father I've known You as a Friend  
And I have lived in the goodness of God, yeah

Because all my life You have been faithful, And all my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able, Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me x2  
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now, I give You everything,  
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me x3  
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now. I give you everything.  
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me

Because all my life You have been faithful, And all my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able, Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

Goodness of God lyrics © Bethel Music Publishing

### **Blessing**

In all the tough times coming up ahead, may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turns his face toward you and gives you peace.

### **The Grace**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen**

### **This week's notices**

Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup>	8pm	Zoom prayer meeting
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Renew Wellbeing
	12.15	Bible study
	2pm	Want to know more about Jesus? course
Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Toddlers
	10.30am	Bible study
	12.00am – 1.15pm	Outreach outside St Lawrence
	7.30pm	Men's Bible study
Friday 27 <sup>th</sup>	5.00pm	Table Tennis Club
	6.30	Iranian get together and Bible study
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Worship service followed by lunch for recent newcomers

### **QR for offering**

