**Home Service Sheet 13th August 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Psalm 71:17-21**

O God, from my youth you have taught me,
    and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and grey hairs,
    O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to another generation,
    your power to all those to come.
Your righteousness, O God,
    reaches the high heavens.
You who have done great things,
    O God, who is like you?
You who have made me see many troubles and calamities
    will revive me again;
from the depths of the earth
    you will bring me up again.
You will increase my greatness
    and comfort me again.

**Opening Prayer**

Loving God, from our mother’s womb You have known us and cared for us. From before the world began You loved us and purposed that we would be Your children, adopted into Your family through faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, You are faithful to us throughout our lives, and we can truly trust in You. We thank You and praise for all the great and mighty things You have done for us, and for the blessings that You have given us through Your Son. In Jesus we know that we will rise again to life and spend eternity with You. Thank You Lord, amen.

**Hymn                                     Wonderful grace**by ***John Pantry***

<https://youtu.be/gbba75KLE1A>

Wonderful grace that gives what I don’t deserve,
Pays me what Christ has earned then lets me go free.
Wonderful grace that gives me the time to change,
Washes away the stains that once covered me.

***And all that I have I lay at the feet
Of the wonderful Saviour who loves me.***

Wonderful love that held in the face of death,
Breathed in its final breath forgiveness for me.
Wonderful love whose power can break every chain
Giving us life again, then setting us free.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, For ever and ever, amen.

**Bible Reading                     Ephesians 2:1-10**

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the bodyand the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.ButGod, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Reflection**

This week we return to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, where we are reminded of God’s wonderful grace towards us in Christ Jesus. Paul begins this chapter by stating clearly that without Jesus we were dead in our sins. It is impossible for us to overstate the significance and seriousness of sin, and the way that it separates us from the love of God. Within the law that God gave to His people through Moses there are a grand total of 613 individual laws or commands. To break one of these, on one occasion, is enough for any of us to be judged guilty before our Holy God, and condemned to eternal punishment in hell.

Yet, God has graciously and mercifully stepped in, sending His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in our place at the cross, taking upon Himself the punishment that we deserved. Paul writes in verse 8 that “by grace you have been saved through faith.” None of us deserve to be forgiven our sin, and therefore our only hope is the undeserved favour, or grace, of God. Yet God is also just and cannot simply ignore our sin and let it slide, so to speak. Rather the price for our sin had to be paid by One who was not guilty of any sin Himself. By believing in Jesus, that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, who did what the Scriptures say He did, dying and rising again to life on the third day, the grace of God is gifted to us so that we are forgiven our sin and reconciled to God.

Paul makes it very clear that we are not, and could never be, forgiven because of anything that we have done or could possibly ever do ourselves. In fact, Paul tells us that this is at least partially so that we can have nothing to boast about before God. Our salvation relies entirely upon God and what He has done. The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary in the first place! Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ that He came and died in our place in obedience to the will of the Father, because without His acting in this way we would be without any hope whatsoever for the world to come.

Verse 10 shows us what our purpose is, now that we are adopted into God’s family. We read there, “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Although we cannot be saved by good works, we are nonetheless made anew in Christ to do good works. At first this might seem rather confusing. We cannot do good works perfectly, which is why we need God’s grace, but once we have received His grace we are to live and walk in good works. To put it another way, that which we couldn’t do before we were saved, do good works, we can now do through the work of God’s Holy Spirit who dwells within us. We can still not do this perfectly, but because we are in Christ these good works are seen differently by God and are no longer counted in the same way they were.

There is a remarkable contrast between the way we used to live and walk before we were saved by grace through faith in Christ. Paul described the old life earlier in the chapter as “following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (v.2). This points us to the fact that the world’s ways of living are opposed to God’s ways, and therefore find their origin with Satan. God’s Word is very clear on many things, and yet the world often says the opposite, and in doing so it shows that it is influenced and ruled by the devil. Paul continues in verse 3, writing that “we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the bodyand the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” In other words, our destination was the wrath of God.

Now there are some things that would almost universally be seen as evil by people, such as murder and child abuse, but when it comes to many other issues the world calls good what is evil, and evil what is good. If we agree with the world we are disobeying God and His Word and the consequences of this are severe. The Apostle John wrote the following warning, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15) We have to choose which side we are on – the world’s side, or God’s side. Having faith in Christ means that we must reject the world’s ways and walk in God’s ways instead, by the power of God’s Spirit. May that be the way that we walk as we seek to follow Christ. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us to a deeper understanding of Your grace and mercy towards us. Through Your Word, You have shown us that there is no good thing in us that is acceptable to You in the way we live. It is only by grace, through faith in the work of Your Son, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we are made acceptable to You. Loving Father, we praise Your wonderful name because we are Your handiwork. Thank You that we were not saved by good works, but we thank You that we are saved unto good works. Help us to live to serve You wholeheartedly in the works You have prepared for us to do, to Your praise and glory. In Jesus' Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

Loving Father, what an honour and blessing it is for us to be seated with Your Son, Jesus Christ, in heavenly places. As we view our lives from that heavenly position, may everything be put into proper perspective. Help us to always set our hearts and minds on things above, rather than things on this earth. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.