**Home Service Sheet For 18th July 2021**

**Call to Worship:                              Psalm 119:33-40**

**33**Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes;
    and I will keep it to the end.
**34**Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
    and observe it with my whole heart.
**35**Lead me in the path of your commandments,
    for I delight in it.
**36**Incline my heart to your testimonies,
    and not to selfish gain!
**37**Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;
    and give me life in your ways.
**38**Confirm to your servant your promise,
    that you may be feared.
**39**Turn away the reproach that I dread,
    for your rules are good.
**40**Behold, I long for your precepts;
    in your righteousness give me life!

Heavenly Father, today we proclaim that You love us more than we can fully grasp or know. Your Word reveals the height, depth and width of Your love towards us in Your Son, Jesus Christ. You chose us from the very beginning of creation to be Your children. We praise Your holy name. You sent Your Son, Jesus, into this world as the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us and died for us. Lord, we praise Your holy name. Then You sent Your Holy Spirit, to be present and empower us in our lives from the moment that we first believed. Lord, we praise Your holy name. Amen!

Read or Sing **A New Commandment** written by ***Unknown***

<https://youtu.be/485btt72V2o>

A new commandment I give unto you
That you love one another as I have loved you,
That you love one another as I have loved you.

By this shall all men know that you are My disciples,

If you have love one for another.

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                                 Galatians 5:7-15**

**7**You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? **8**This persuasion is not from him who calls you. **9**A little leaven leavens the whole lump. **10**I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. **11**But if I, brothers, still preachcircumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offence of the cross has been removed. **12**I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

**13**For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **14**For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” **15**But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

The Apostle Paul uses illustrations from the sports of his day on a few occasions in his letters. Most often he writes about running a race, which he uses as a metaphor for living the Christian life. It’s not a quick sprint, but rather a long race like a marathon. In our Bible reading today the Galatian believers’ race has been waylaid or diverted by false teachers. They had made a good start while Paul was with them, wholeheartedly embracing the Gospel message and the Christian life.

“Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” Paul asks. This is not a matter of differing opinions or agreeing to disagree; this is fundamental teaching or doctrine to which we must all cling. Paul is speaking of the heart of the Gospel: we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. Any who suggest that anything else is required, whether circumcision or obedience to the law, is a false teacher. Paul makes it clear that they are motivated by the devil, and not by God. It’s also very clear that the potential impact of such false teachers and false teaching is very serious – “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

False teachers in the Church are to be avoided at all costs! They are also in danger of eternal punishment in hell, as Paul makes clear here and elsewhere. God is gracious, and so if such people will repent of their false teaching, and seek God’s forgiveness, they will be forgiven and saved. Even if we are led astray for a period of time, as we may possibly be, we can seek God’s forgiveness in Christ. Personally, I’ve been led astray in the past, but God has graciously brought me back to the truth of His Word. False teachers are dangerous, and Paul reveals his frustration at them in verse 12 – “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”

Paul then returns to the theme of Christian freedom, developing it further with added practicalities of what it means to follow Jesus. Freedom is given us not so that we can fulfil the desires of our sinful selves, but rather that we might freely surrender to Christ and His lordship over us and over our lives. Paul points us to lovingly serve one another, as Jesus Himself served His disciples and others during His earthly ministry. The greatest service we can do for anyone is to proclaim the Gospel to them, telling them how they may be saved. That is our first and main act of service, although there are other ways in which we may serve one another in love.

We are then pointed back to the very heart of the law. This might seem counterintuitive as Paul has spent much time writing of slavery under the law, and its inability to justify us before God. However, although the law cannot save us, it still reveals God’s character to us, and shows us how we are meant to live. Jesus said that He came not to destroy the law, but rather to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17). We are called to live in holiness, following the moral law of God. Jesus summed up the law and the prophets with the commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and love our neighbour as ourself (Matthew 22:36-40).

If, instead of serving one another in love, we verbally attack and take advantage of one another there is a big problem. This is not about putting up with false teachers, but rather about treating fellow true believers badly. Such actions and attitudes create vicious circles that end up hurting everyone. When we focus on us and our desires we forget to love one another, whereas if we seek to serve others we are obeying God. We grow in our faith, and run the race well once again. Amen!

**Prayers of Intercession**

O God, our Heavenly Father, we come before You with our prayers and concerns for Your world, Your Church, and ourselves. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

·      Gracious God, we pray for governments and rulers throughout the world. May You grant to them wisdom to make good decisions that benefit all. We pray too for the United Nations and other multinational organisations that seek to make this world a better place.

* Gracious God, we pray for those who are unwell, in pain or in need. Help us to provide comfort and care where we may do so. Be with those whose job it is to treat, care for or help all who suffer. We think particularly of doctors, nurses and other carers who seek to bring relief to those who suffer.
* Gracious God, we pray for Your worldwide Church. We pray for all Christians facing persecution for the name of Christ, asking that You would give them courage and strength to keep following You. Lord, we pray for our local fellowships, asking that You would guide us in our thinking and decision making as we look forward.
* Gracious God, we pray also for ourselves. May we walk in obedience to You, and to Your Word, every day. Grant us strength in weakness, guidance in confusion and courage when faced with trouble. In all things, may we live to Your praise and glory!

In the precious Name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ we ask it, amen!

**Blessing**

Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on You; eyes to behold You, ears to listen attentively to Your Word; hearts to love You with all our being; and a life to proclaim Your Gospel. This we ask in the Name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen