**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 2nd February 2025**

**Call To Worship:                Zephaniah 3:14-17**

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
    shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
    O daughter of Jerusalem!
The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;
    he has cleared away your enemies.
The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
    you shall never again fear evil.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
“Fear not, O Zion;
    let not your hands grow weak.
The Lord your God is in your midst,
    a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
    he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious and loving God, we praise and worship You today for making Yourself known to us through Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for being our Father and forgiving all of our sins, not because we deserve it, but because Christ died in our place to pay the price for all of our sins. Thank You for all that You have done for us, and for the future hope of glory that we have through faith in Jesus as Saviour. Thank You that because we are in Christ, You are for us. May we never forget that amazing truth. As we read Your Word today help us to understand it and put it into practice. This we ask in Jesus’ Name and to Your glory, amen.

**Hymn:**                                  **How deep the Father’s love**by *Stuart Townend*

<https://youtu.be/QeUUmuwZIRs?si=2R0Ui407qaE8rHnm>

How deep the Father’s love for us, how vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss – the Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life – I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart – His wounds have paid my ransom.

**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:                    Romans 8:31-39**

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died - more than that, who was raised - who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
    we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Reflection**

Paul’s letter to the Romans arguably contains the greatest description of God’s love that we find in all of Scripture. Before we look at that, though, it is important for us to remember what God’s love is not. The kind of love that God has for those who are called according to His purposes, is a love that wants the best for those He loves. It is a love that desires to transform us into the likeness of His Son in holiness and righteousness. As we study this passage of Scripture let us remember this, and not get caught up in the wishy-washy kind of love that our world today insists upon. Love that allows others to do that which will harm them and turn them away from God us not love at all!

In verse 31 Paul asks who can be against us if God is for us? What I believe that he is getting at here is that compared with the love of God for us, and His grace and favour towards us, all opposition is as nothing. The love of God is so much greater than the hatred or opposition of any human being. Paul further emphasises the love of God by pointing us to the wondrous gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus, who died for us on the cross. We see the extent of God’s love in this ultimate sacrifice - that’s how important we are to the Lord and how loved we are! Notice also that all that we have is ours because of what God has done for us, rather than what we have done to deserve it.

If the Lord is on our side, which He is, then we have nothing to fear from the accusations of others (v.33). In the Bible the great accuser of the brethren is a title reserved for the devil (Revelation 12:10), and I suspect this may be what Paul has in mind here. God’s love for us, and election of us, cannot be overcome or cancelled by the worst that the world or the devil can throw at us. We can be assured of our salvation if we have faith in Christ as the Son of God who died to take away our sins. We do not need to fear what will happen when we die if we are in Christ. Only God Himself can condemn human beings to hell, not the devil, because God reigns over everyone and everything completely.

Paul goes on to write about some of the worst things that can be part of our human experience. Persecution, danger, famine, violence, personal and natural disasters are all imposters that cannot separate us from God. Only rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ can separate us from God. That is not to say that these trials and hardships are easy to live through, because our human experience will tell us that they are not. Nonetheless, God is with us through them, and gives us the courage and endurance to keep on following Him. Verse 37 tells us that we are conquerors over all these terrible circumstances, not because of our own strength or endurance, but rather because of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Whatever we may face in this life, even death itself, it is nothing that can separate us from God’s love for us.

As a younger Christian I struggled to fully grasp the significance of this. I used to believe that we could believe in Christ, but then turn our back on Him and lose our salvation. This, however, is not what the Scriptures teach us. Rather, they speak of us being chosen by God for salvation even before the world was created. God’s purposes and plans cannot be thwarted by human effort or demonic scheme. Another way of putting this (thanks Janet!) would be to say that we cannot argue with God or His purposes and plans. What God has purposed He will bring to completion in our lives and in the lives of all who have received His gracious gift of faith in His Son.

So, can anything separate us from the love of God found in and demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ? The simple and glorious answer is ‘no’! By this we should be greatly encouraged and motivated to give God the praise and glory He deserves. Amen!

**Prayer**

Almighty God, we thank You for the wonderful assurance of salvation we have in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You have said in Your Word that nothing can separate us from Your love in Jesus, and we praise You that Your gift of faith endures through all the trials of life. We pray today for those who are struggling in their walk with You. Grant them courage and perseverance, especially in the face of persecution. We know, O Lord, that in some parts of this world following You can be very dangerous due to violence or threats of imprisonment, and yet Your Church is growing. Lord Jesus, continue to build Your Church throughout the world and in our own nation that many more folk would enter into eternal life and live to Your praise and glory. This we ask in Your Name, amen.

**Benediction**

Grant to us, O gracious Lord, minds to meditate on You, eyes to behold You, ears to listen to Your Word, hearts to love You, and lives to proclaim You. These things we ask You to do in and through the power of Your Holy Spirit within us, amen.