**Home Service Sheet For 2 May 2021**

**Call to Worship:**                              **Psalm 71:1-6**

Gracious God, we thank You and praise You because You are our strength and refuge. When all around us seems terrible and we face pain, grief and danger You are there with us. To You, O Lord, belongs all the worship, honour and blessing! Your grace towards us in Your Son, Jesus Christ is beyond our understanding and too marvellous for words. Your love is truly deeper than the deepest of oceans and wider than East is from West. May this time of worship be acceptable to You, O God. As we turn to Your Word grant us wisdom to understand and apply it within our lives, day by day. These things we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

Read or Sing **In Christ alone**by ***Stuart Townend & Keith Getty***

[***https://youtu.be/mnLl663WWnc***](https://youtu.be/mnLl663WWnc)

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save:  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied –  
For every sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin’s curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine –  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me;  
From life’s first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand:  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.

**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                                 Galatians 2:15-21**

Having had a fairly lengthy break from Paul’s letter to the Galatians, I think we should quickly remind ourselves what Paul has already taught us. Much of the letter, so far, has been concerned with properly understanding the Gospel message, and discarding the false teaching to which the Galatian church had been exposed. Salvation is graciously given to us through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, and not because of any goodness of our own (not that we have any). Today we pick up on Paul’s explanation as to why our own works cannot justify us or save us from our sin.

If we look to the Old Testament we find Job’s ‘friend’, Bildad asking a key question, “How… can a man be just with God?” (Job 25:4) The honest answer is that, on our own, no human being can be just, or right, with God. Paul expresses it very clearly in verse 16, “by works of the law no one will be justified”. However good we might be, it can never be good enough to make us right with God, because He is holy, and only perfection will do. The only way anyone can be counted perfect before God is through the perfection of Jesus Christ being applied to them through faith in Him.

In other words Jesus was perfect (without sin), and at the cross the sin of humanity was put on to Him (imputed). By His death the price was paid for our sin. His sacrifice satisfied (propitiated) the wrath of God towards sinners. In turn, through faith in Christ, His perfection (righteousness) is put onto us (imputed) so that we can stand before the Heavenly Father as justified (righteous). We are treated as if we were perfect, because we are made perfect by God’s grace, through faith in Jesus. This is at the very centre of our faith, and yet there are those in the Church today who deny this, and are in danger of the flames of hell because they are preaching a ‘different gospel’. It is that serious, and even the great reformer, Martin Luther, said as much!

Paul continues in verse 17 by writing “But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!” Let’s unpack what this means. The ‘we’ here is Paul, Peter and other Jewish Christians. They had previously eaten with Gentiles, treating them as full brothers and sisters in Christ, as they in fact were. However, when Peter withdrew from the Gentile Christians he was implying that Jesus was a liar. During His ministry, Jesus had taught that what goes into a person (i.e. food and drink) does not make them unclean (Matthew 15:11). By refusing to eat with the Gentiles, Peter was in effect saying that it was now sinful to eat certain things. Of course, Jesus was right and Peter was wrong!

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ our old, sinful self is crucified with Him – it is no more. As Paul writes in verse 20, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” If we go back to the old way of thinking that we can somehow make ourselves right with God through our actions (keeping the law), then we are rejecting the Gospel of Jesus. We would be saying, in effect, that Jesus did not have to die on the cross, but we know that this is not true. It is only because Jesus died in our place on the cross that we can be forgiven and reconciled to God to eternal life. Jesus’ sacrifice, prompted by God’s grace, is necessary and sufficient to save us alone! Amen!

**Prayers of Intercession**

Loving God, we come before You now with our prayers for the world, the Church and ourselves. As we bring these cries to You, we ask that You would hear our prayer.

·      We pray for the leaders of this world, for governments, presidents, kings and queens. Lord grant to them wisdom and compassion as they rule with the authority that You have given them. We pray also for those whom they rule, asking that they would be well cared for and respected.

·      We pray for those who are ill, particularly those suffering with Covid, O Lord. We particularly pray for those suffering in India, where hospitals are overrun, and many medical workers are sick themselves. We thank You for the vaccinations we have been able to have, and pray for all those caring for the sick.

·      We pray for Your Church throughout this world. Lord God, we think particularly of those suffering persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Grant to them strength and courage in the midst of their struggles. We also ask, O Lord, that You would continue to build Your Church, and empower the preaching of the Gospel.

·      We pray too, Loving God, for ourselves and those whom we know and love. Be with each one and all who are lonely. Grant strength and courage to the weak. Provide comfort and love to those who grieve, and to each of us grant us determination to follow You every day of our lives. May we seek Your praise and glory in all we do and say.

These things we ask in the name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen!

**Blessing**

Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed, guide and strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit, so that we may give ourselves to Your service, and live this day in love to one another and to You. This we ask through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, amen!