**Home Service Sheet For 9 May 2021**

**Call to Worship:**                  **Exodus 3:1-6**

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2**And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. **3**And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” **4**When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5**Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6**And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Almighty God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, we come to You today with awe and wonder. You are the God who has created all things, and who sustains them day by day. Lord God, we proclaim that You are holy, and worthy to receive all praise, majesty and glory! We praise and thank You for making Yourself known to us through Your Word, and through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Just as You showed Yourself to Moses, so You have revealed Yourself to us in the Person of Your Son, through His teachings, His love and His death. Help us to keep our focus on You today, especially during this time of worship. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

Read or Sing **The God of Abraham Praise**by ***Daniel ben Judah, paraphrased by Thomas Olivers***

[***https://youtu.be/OvTgzJ2nZGo***](https://youtu.be/OvTgzJ2nZGo)

The God of Abraham praise, who reigns enthroned above;

Ancient of everlasting days, and God of love.

Jehovah, great I AM, by earth and heaven confessed;

I bow and bless the sacred name, forever blest.

The God of Abraham praise, at whose supreme command

From earth I rise and seek the joys at His right hand.

I all on earth forsake, its wisdom, fame, and power;

And Him my only portion make, my shield and tower.

He by Himself hath sworn, I on His oath depend,

I shall, on eagle’s wings upborne, to heaven ascend;

I shall behold His face, I shall His power adore,

And sing the wonders of His grace forevermore.

The whole triumphant host give thanks to God on high;

“Hail, Father, Son and Holy Ghost!” they ever cry.

Hail, Abraham’s God and mine! I join the heavenly lays;

All might and majesty are Thine, and endless praise.

**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 3:1-9**

**1** O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. **2**Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? **3**Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected bythe flesh? **4**Did you sufferso many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? **5**Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith - **6**just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

**7**Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. **8**And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justifythe Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” **9**So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Last week we reminded ourselves that we are made right with God by faith in what Jesus did on the cross, and not by obedience to the law, or good works. Sadly, this is exactly where the Galatian believers had gone astray. Paul struggled to understand how they had abandoned the truth of the Gospel for a works based alternative, and went so far as to call them ‘foolish’. Interestingly it is a form of the same word Jesus used to rebuke the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, when He said, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” (Luke 24:25) Just as those disciples had missed the point, so too had the Galatian Christians!

Although the language Paul uses could suggest some kind of sorcery (“who has bewitched you?”), I don’t think he is implying anything more than sleight of hand here. They have been tricked by clever words and an attractive presentation of something ‘more’ than the Gospel. A common human weakness is our desire for ‘more’; more money, more possessions, a better car, a fancier suit or coat. Instead of being content with what we already have, we look for something more that will make our lives better in some undefined way. The reality, though, is that this ongoing pursuit makes us less happy and more restless.

With the Gospel, such seeking after ‘more’ is mistaken as God gives us all we need at the point of our salvation through faith in Christ. We receive the forgiveness of our sins, eternal life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There is no more for us to receive other than the fulfilment of eternal life when our human bodies fail. Nothing that we do can add anything to our life in Christ or our experience as Christians. Paul makes this point very clearly in verses 2 and 3, by firstly asking the rhetorical question, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” He then goes on to comment “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected bythe flesh?”

It is only through the work of Jesus on the cross that we can be justified, and it is only through the work of God’s Spirit that we can be perfected. Human efforts are useless, or in vain, but it doesn’t stop us trying anyway, does it? It’s very easy to think that if we do the right things, we will somehow be specially blessed by God, but that is not the case. Paul refers us back to Abraham, who was saved by God, not on account of his obedience or actions, but rather because he “believed God”. Abraham is set forth as a good example of what it means to be a man (or woman) of faith, not just by Paul, but also by the author of the letter to the Hebrews.

In Hebrews chapter 11 we can read all about the men and women of faith who have gone before us, and be encouraged that they did great things ‘by faith’. In other words they believed and trusted God, and that is all that is necessary. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8) Remember that it’s not the actions of Abraham that pleased God, but rather it was his faith or belief. The action was done by God, preparing the way for Abraham and his descendants to enter the Promised Land, first of Israel, but ultimately of the new heavens and the new earth with God.

In the First Century a common Jewish boast was that they were children of Abraham, relying on their lineage and Jewishness to claim they were better than others. Paul, however, understands that true children of Abraham, who will inherit the promise of eternal life, are made so not by their family tree, but rather by faith in Christ Jesus. Paul concludes this section with “So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” In case we needed any more reminding, we are made right with God through faith in what His Son, Jesus Christ, has already done for us at Calvary! Amen!

**Prayers of Intercession**

God of all mercy and compassion, life and death are in your hands. Hear our prayers in this ongoing time of illness and infection, of isolation, fear, and uncertainty:

* We pray for the sick, and those weighed down by pain, distress, loneliness, and anxiety. Lord, we also remember all who care for them, conscious of the risks they bear, as well as those who have responsibility for public health and social order. We pray too for our Government, asking that You would grant them wisdom and compassion as they lead.
* Hear the cry of the afflicted and let them be comforted, O Lord, so that all who suffer may come to know that they are joined to the sufferings of Christ, who gave His life for the salvation of the world. We pray for aid workers and charity volunteers who seek to bring help and relief through the work they do. Grant to them strength and compassion in all their dealings with others, we pray.
* We pray for the Church, and for individual brothers and sisters in Christ. Gracious God, we pray for all who are suffering persecution for their faith in You. Strengthen them, we pray, and give to them boldness to continue witnessing to the Gospel. We join in the prayer of Your Son also, that You would build Your Church, even in these dark times in which we live.
* Finally, O Lord, we pray for ourselves too. Help us to keep our hope and trust in You alone. Fill us afresh with faith to live out our lives in the power of Your Holy Spirit and to Your glory. Grant us Your guidance each day to live in obedience to Your Word.

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

**Blessing**

Heavenly Father, protect our minds and hearts from all false teachings that are sweeping Your church today and help us to keep our focus on Christ alone. Lord, You are able and willing to keep us from stumbling, and for this we thank You. Open our eyes to see Your glorious majesty, Your sovereign power, Your matchless authority and Your magnificent glory, for You alone are worthy of all glory, majesty, dominion and authority, both now and forevermore! In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen!