**Home Service Sheet for Sunday 14th July 2024**

**Call To Worship Psalm 20:6-8**

Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed;

    he will answer him from his holy heaven

    with the saving might of his right hand.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses,

    but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

They collapse and fall,

    but we rise and stand upright.

**Opening Prayer**

Loving God, in You alone is our salvation found. You sent Your Son to die in our place on the cross so that our sins might be forgiven. You demonstrated Your love for us perfectly in Jesus and You have extended Your grace and mercy towards us through His death and resurrection. Thank You, O Lord, that we can stand firm in You regardless of whatever is going on in the world around us. Help us to celebrate Your mighty power and praise You for Your amazing grace. Amen!

Hymn Stand up, stand up for Jesus by George Duffield

<https://youtu.be/xUII9PabHPE?si=ZPH6KjO_dyzkF9fE>

Stand up, stand up for Jesus ye soldiers of the cross;

Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss.

From victory unto victory His army He shall lead

Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey;

Forth to the mighty conflict in this His glorious day.

Ye that are men now serve Him against unnumbered foes;

Let courage rise with danger and strength to strength oppose.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone;

The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.

Put on the gospel armour, and watching unto prayer;

Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the strife will not be long;

This day the noise of battle, the next, the victor's song.

To Him that overcometh, a crown of life shall be;

He with the King of glory shall reign eternally.

**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 6:10-24**

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

**Reflection**

It has been good, over the past several months, to spend time working our way through Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus. We began by recognising that this important letter tells us what God has done for us, His Church, in Christ Jesus. It has also directed us as to how we should live out our lives as sons and daughters of God, adopted into His family by grace through faith in Jesus. Today we come to the end of this metaphorical journey, reading Paul’s final words in this letter. We are going to just focus on two points today and those are standing firm in Christ and standing firm on God’s Word.

Verse 10 begins by telling us to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” In other words, this is all about God and His ability, not ours. The Gospel shows us that we can do nothing towards our own salvation to eternal life. It is entirely the work of God in Christ that He did in our place and for our benefit. The life that we are to live, now that we have been adopted into the family of God, is again only possible in so much as the Holy Spirit is dwelling within us and transforming our hearts and minds. The problem for many of us is that we like to be self-reliant, not needing the help of others. We want to sort out our own problems and issues without the help of anyone else. We are not, however, designed to live that way. We only know what is good and right because God has revealed this to us. The Christian faith, unlike all other religions, comes down to what God has done for us rather than what we can do for God.

How do we stand firm then in the strength of God? In verse 11 Paul writes that we are to “put on the whole armour of God”. This is nothing weird or magical, but rather a reminder that we need to be clothed by God’s grace. Nonetheless, we are instructed to resist the devil. James writes this in his letter, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:6-8)

In verse 14, Paul repeats the instruction to stand firm. Scripture speaks of God’s people standing firm in a number of places, usually with the understanding that God is supporting us and enabling us to stand firm. We stand against the ways of this fallen world, and we stand for God’s perfect and righteous ways. We stand against false teaching and false teachers, standing firm on the true teaching of God’s Word. We are able to stand firm because we are in Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells within us. It is nothing to do with any strength that we may possess in ourselves as human beings.

Over the next few verses Paul refers to the various items that make up the whole armour of God. I’m not going to go into the details of this today, but I do want to note that this armour is all defensive, apart from one item – the sword of the Spirit. Paul goes on to identify this as “the Word of God”. Although Jesus is described as the Word in the Gospel of John, I think it’s pretty clear that Paul is referring to God’s written Word, the Scriptures, here. How often are new believers caught out because they do not know what God has revealed in His Word! The better we know the Scriptures, the less likely we are to be taken in by false teaching. We can defend ourselves against heresy by reading and recalling the written Word of God, which the Holy Spirit helps us to understand, remember and apply in our lives.

This is the only piece of this whole armour of God that is offensive. In other words, we are not to go out looking for spiritual trouble. Rather, God has equipped us to withstand the attacks of the enemy by standing firm with all that He has already given to us in Christ Jesus. We are to follow the example of the Lord Jesus and use the sword carefully and defensively. The best defence against false teaching and temptation is the Word of God. “It is written” was Jesus’ response to the tempting he received from the devil in the wilderness. In like manner, we too should turn to God’s Word to answer difficult situations in which we may find ourselves. By doing this we will continue to stand firm in the Lord. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for giving us all that we need to be victorious in the spiritual battle in which all Your children are engaged. Help us to rely on You and not on our own abilities. Help us to find all we need in You and in the power of Your might. Lord, we thank You too that Christ Jesus has won the victory over sin, the devil, and the spiritual forces of evil. Help all Your people to recognise that we can only defeat the spiritual enemies that war in the world today, through Christ. Thank You for providing us with the means to live a victorious life in Christ, through the Word of God, prayer and praise, and by abiding in Christ and He in us. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Blessing**

Gracious God, thank You for Your perfect peace and gracious love which is bestowed on us through faith in Christ. Thank You that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, and that no one can remove the perfect peace You place within our hearts, through the almighty power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thank You, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.