**Home Service Sheet 22nd October 2023**

**Call To Worship                 Psalm 103:8-14**

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
    slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
    nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
    nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
    so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
    so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
    so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.
For he knows our frame;
    he remembers that we are dust.

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You today for Your great mercy and compassion towards us. Even though we were dead in our sins, You sent Your Son into this world to redeem us and grant us eternal life through faith in Him. Through His death the price was paid for our sins. You took them away from us and revealed to us Your love which is deeper than the deepest of oceans. Lord God, we thank You for adopting us into Your family as sons and daughters and co-heirs with Christ. Keep us ever thankful to You each day

In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Hymn                                     To God be the glory!**by ***Fanny Crosby***

<https://youtu.be/3vbGFupxwu0?si=kB7TbM6f-o034yzL>

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

***Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice;
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.***

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see.

**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 3:14-21**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,**15**from whom every familyin heaven and on earth is named, **16**that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17**so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18**may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19**and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**20**Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21**to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

**Reflection**

Last week we studied the earlier part of Ephesians chapter 3 and were reminded about the purpose of the Church and all Christians to bring glory to God. Our reading this week concludes the first half of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians with a short prayer that also seeks to glorify God. It is clear as we read this letter that the best thing Paul could do for the believers in Ephesus is to pray for them. Several times Paul writes about the substance of what he is praying for them and certainly we read some more of that today.

In verses 14 and 15 we are reminded of the need to come to God with awe and humility. It is God who has created all things, and from Him comes all families. Paul’s expression about bowing his knees refers to his physical position for prayer – on his knees before God. This kind of approach is not part of our tradition and neither is it essential that we pray whilst we are literally on our knees. However, it can be a good reminder of the fact that we are fully reliant upon the grace of God. He is awesome, powerful and holy, whereas we are weak and sinful. Yet God loves us and wants us to pray to Him – what a wonderful privilege that is!

So what does Paul pray for the believers in Ephesus? He begins by asking God to strengthen them by His Holy Spirit. He is not asking for physical strength, but rather strength of character and strength of conviction to keep on following Jesus whatever may come their way. Some people might suggest that this is a prayer for them to receive gifts of the Spirit, but as we read on we will see Paul focusing more on things that we would connect to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). As God answers this prayer the believers in Ephesus would become ever more like Jesus, demonstrating His love in the way that they live.

As Jesus Christ lives in the heart of a believer a process of transformation is taking place. They will come to know God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - more and more, mainly through an increasing love of His Word and a desire to read it. That knowledge will equip them to tell others what He is like and what He has done for them. It will also point us towards praise and thanksgiving to God as the One who has taken our sins far away from us and forgiven us, as Psalm 103 reminds us. This is the power that Paul prays the believers in Ephesus will receive from the Spirit of God. All of this is built on the foundation of God’s love as seen in Christ.

Paul concludes that short section with a prayer that they be filled with the ‘fullness of God”. What does he mean by this, and how can we as finite human beings contain everything of God within us? Well, in one sense this is impossible, but with God nothing is impossible! It is through the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, who dwells within us that we can have the fullness of God. It is He who gives us power, courage, faith, love and so much more to use in the service of God and people. Through all of this we can do all that God wants for us to do and bring Him glory. To God be the glory, today and forever, amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word and the amazing truths that it contains. Help us to put away all thoughts that we have to add something to the finished work of Christ and remind us of all the gracious benefits we have in Him. Give us the opportunity to share this wonderful truth of salvation by grace through faith in Christ with others and may many come to faith in Him today and in the days that lie ahead. We pray too for this world with its violence, warfare and strife. May Your peace come to reign in the hearts of those who are set on violence and hatred we pray. Help us to represent You well day by day, for we ask this in Jesus’ Name and to Your glory, amen.

**Benediction**

To the only true God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by His power at work in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even imagine: to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, forever and ever! Amen.