**Sunday 10th May**

1 Corinthians 3: 17, 18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Over the past few weeks of lockdown, we have had a number of the freedoms that we usually enjoy curtailed because of the dangers of Coronavirus. I have thought quite a bit about people that live in nations where to be a Christian is to risk your life or freedom, and where it is dangerous or impossible to meet. I guess not being able to gather as a church has given me a tiny bit more understanding of what it must be like for them continually, and what a blessing it is to be able to freely enjoy fellowship in this nation. There are reports of Christians in parts of China for whom gatherings are so dangerous, that when one is planned, no-one can be given details. The Christians spend time seeking the Lord in order to find out from Him supernaturally the time and location of that gathering!  Some Christians around the world are in prison for their faith, and it might seem that all their freedoms have been taken away. And yet, St Paul writes that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, and the Spirit of the Lord can be found inhabiting every Christian. Persecuted Christians testify that even in confinement they know this kind of freedom! In our current lockdown climate, we too can know the freedom that the Spirit brings. And the indwelling of the Holy Spirit also means that we are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus – the more His character is formed in us, the more free we become! Free to be who we were created to be.

*Lord Jesus, we lift before you today our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering because they love you and own your name. We ask you to draw near to them, even now – to comfort them with your presence and your peace; to sustain them and give them courage. We know that you are able to set people free from prison – that you have freed persecuted Christians from physical prisons, and your free us from captivity to the other things that prevent us from living as you created us to. We ask you to bring your freedom today. We pray too for ourselves that you would fill us afresh with your Holy Spirit, transform us with your presence and that we would experience your perfect freedom. In your precious name. Amen*

