Romans 5:6 and 8 For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly…But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

I want you to turn your attention for a moment to the words of our Old Testament reading. You do realize that our Old Testament reading already establishes the basis for the lesson that is taught in our Epistle reading?

The Old Testament lesson, taken from Exodus, is a kind of “recap” of all that has taken place for the people of Israel up to this point. They had been living in Egypt for the last 400 years. While in Egypt they grew and grew into a huge family and people. In the last 100 years of being in the land of Egypt, they were made slaves and all of this took place to bring about the events of the Exodus. Along comes Moses and eventually Moses, through the hand of God, becomes the instrument to delivers these people out of Egypt and lead them to the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now so far, just ask yourself, what have these people, this giant family to be called Israelites, actually done to bring any of this about?

Next comes the ten plagues, the freeing from slavery, the looting of the Egyptians, the Lord luring the Egyptians to pursue, the Egyptian army drowning as it attempts to cross the same sea the Israelites did. Oh, and should I mention the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of light by night that leads and guides the people? Clearly, some powerful force, some majestic divinity is guiding and directing these people. Now here they are at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the Lord God himself will speak with them and directly give them the words that we now call Ten Commandments. And the question is again asked: What did the Israelites themselves do to bring all of this about?

The answer is actually given in our Old Testament text. The Lord, here speaking through Moses, says, **“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself.”** Everything that has taken place: their growth in numbers, their slavery, their freedom, the fact that they are now sitting in front of Mt. Sinai getting ready to be addressed by the Lord is all taking place because the Lord God has acted and the Lord God has chosen and made them his people. The Lord God is bringing about all of these things for one specific purpose, so that at the right time the Lord might send a Savior who is Christ the Lord, who will save the entire world from the horror and problem of sin. The Lord has done it all. The Lord has acted and moved. The Lord has made them and saved them and will completely reveal himself to them simply because the Lord has a plan for the sake of all of mankind. A plan where He will save and deliver. I find it fascinating that everything, even in the Old Testament, was a message of God’s love, God’s care, God’s grace all for the sake of saving souls!

In other words, the message of God has never changed throughout all of history. Let’s remind ourselves of God’s grace to us as we contemplate our text under the theme: **CHRIST DIED FOR US!**

So what is the big deal with Jesus and all the stuff he has done? Do you think that Jesus is just about showing us the right way or demonstrating that if we try hard enough we can please God? If that was all Jesus was about, just a great religious teacher to show us a better way of being and living for the sake of some ethereal “god” then grasp that eventually you have to ask a rather serious question. The question would be this: “Why his death?” Why did Jesus die, as the text say, for us? Why did the Father promise, plan, and eventually carry out this horrid and vicious death of Jesus, if it is only about what we must do in order to serve God, to show God how wonderful we are? If you are going to claim that you are a Christian, then you must answer this question because if you can’t answer this question then there is actually no point or reason for the faith that you have.

What does the Lord say to us? He says in our text in two ways, **“Christ died for us.”** Let’s makes sure we grasp first why this was necessary. Again our text lays it out rather clearly. The key is to seeing the words of fact that the Lord lays before us. Words like: **“helpless, ungodly,** and **sinners.”** We are the helpless. If you don’t mind I am going to share with you the words written about this word in the book, Sermon Studies of the Epistles, Series A (pg 240). They are just excellent words. The only thing you need to know first is that our EHV translates “helpless” and the NIV84 translated “powerless.” But the words of teaching here just couldn’t be better.

*“We are ‘powerless.’ We all like to have or think we have some strength about which we can boast. It may be mental, physical, or financial or whatever. We would like to think of ourselves as having the power or authority to persuade God to do our bidding, to serve us. But as God sees us, we have no strength at all, no strength to seek him, no strength to serve him, no strength to save ourselves, not strength to draw his attention to us…To confess that we are this way is most difficult, even for the Christian, because our sinful flesh would like to take at least some credit. God’s Word, however, still stands. We are ‘powerless.’”* Please, let that lesson sink in. We offer not a single thing to our salvation and forgiveness. We are like the newborn infant. Completely, totally, absolutely dependent on the parents around us to take care of us in every way or we are going to die. And while I used that application to get across to you our total dependence on the Lord, I am aware of the danger of that application. Because somewhere along the line someone is going to claim, “Hey, the baby can breath and suck, therefore the baby can get some credit.” No, the word used here won’t even allow you that. We are “helpless.”

We are “ungodly and sinners.” I am going to combine those words. Ungodly means just that, “without God, without a care or concern for God.” Add to this word the thought of being “sinners.” The word sinner is one that states we are going to go against God. We willfully, eagerly, and with awesome excuses and reasoning disobey God and declare it our right to do so. Such is our very nature before the Lord. We are Adam and Eve, who after they ate of the forbidden fruit, they heard God in the garden and they ran and hid from him. Though nothing about God had changed, they no longer knew that God knew all, saw all, and understood all. They run and hide from God, even though such can’t be done and they cast all blame upon God, even though they are the ones who ate! These two words combined make it clear that we have a deep, a desperate problem that makes us God’s enemies, who naturally fight against his love and grace in every way.

You do realize that I just revealed to you why Christ died! It was to take care of this problem of sin, this deep, horrible, damning problem of sin. We are all involved. We are all eternally infected. If we don’t have Jesus, then I am going to tell you that you are going to die! I am not talking about the simple and factual fact of physical death, the death given to us by God as the sign of the real problem before us: eternal death. If we don’t have Jesus and his works before us, we are all headed for and condemned with the truth of eternal death and hell for every and any sin credited to our souls. But, this is why Christ died!

Our text has a great way of getting across this wonder of Jesus. Listen again. **“Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God’s wrath through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life. And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.”** Let’s rejoice in these words.

Did you catch the coolest of facts? There are three phrase here that just explode with God’s love and grace for us: **“we have now been justified by his blood…we are saved from God’s wrath…while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”** Let’s just rejoice in those revelations of God love.

We have been justified. That means we are declared by the Lord to be free from guilt and the stain of sin and death. This is not something we have done, but rather this is the Lord’s declaration on the basis of Jesus. Because Jesus shed his blood for us, gave his being to eternal hell for us, God the Father, just because of Jesus has made the ruling: “In Jesus, all charges are dropped, all the evidence against you is dismissed, and I, the Lord God of all, pronounce and declare you absolutely and completely “Innocent” of sin! Yep, that’s the word “justified.”

We are saved from God’s wrath. Yep, that means we are delivered, rescued, cured, made well, or preserved. What I find fascinating is that the original text very clearly states that this is done from “the wrath!” It is a reference to the horror of hell and damnation. In other words, the danger of God’s wrath is no longer a part of our soul. It is a unique and wonderful way to say, “We are forgiven our sins in Jesus.”

We are reconciled. Love this word. Again note that this phrase first mentions that we were **“enemies of God.”** Don’t ever forget that bent of your nature. By nature we kick against, run from, and deny the wonder of God. If you know someone with a deep fear, let’s say of spiders, how they react and carry on before a spider is exactly our problem before God. No matter how “illogical” you think their fear of that little, tiny, itty bitty spider is, for them it is real and debilitating. Again if you know someone with such a fear and see how that fear makes them behave, then you can begin to grasp this idea that we are by nature enemies of God.

But Jesus has reconciled us. Our status before God has been changed. Our very hearts are changed and made different. The blood of Jesus does this. This view of God as a fearsome enemy is changed. Yes, God gives us new hearts and minds in Christ. But here is the difficulty with the word “reconcile.” Reconcile speaks more to God’s change toward us, that even though we view God as our enemy, God views us differently, views and accepts us as his children and heirs of his eternal gift of heaven. But reconcile is also a word that does bear on us. Kind of like the passage found in 1 John: **“We love because he first loved us.”** God’s grace to us does have an impact and we have to make sure we grasp this impact in our lives. That realization comes with the gift of faith. The first thing that takes place with faith is **“we will be saved by his life.”**

There is the whole key to this faith thing. Go back and take notice, all of these phrase are adamant about: **“by his blood, through him, by the death of his Son, saved by his life.”** This is important to grasp. What Jesus has done has an impact on us. That’s where verse 11 comes in. It said, **“And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.”** The importance of this verse is that it is clearly guiding us to see and understand that what Jesus has done, and it is the work of Jesus only, but that what Jesus has done, has an impact on us. Here the impact is called: **“we have now received this reconciliation.”**

That tells us that the fact that God views us and considers our status before him changed, creates a change in us. Again, we love because he first loved us. We now have had a status change that impacts us. God’s grace changes us. God’s ideas and wisdom flows in us. God’s passion for good and right, holy and just, pure and unblemished is now our passion. Now if you would, I am going to use another application that I hope will help you.

The end result of what Jesus has done for us is that Jesus makes us a part of his marching band. The first thing he does is puts on us that new and beautiful marching band uniform. Mind you, of our own, we don’t know how to walk, let alone march. We can’t play any instrument, don’t grasp music, have actually never even seen, nor can we comprehend what the marching band does. But we are uniformed up. And Jesus, through his Holy Spirit, begins to give us other gifts and helps, that help us to be a part of what this marching band does. Some of us learn to play instruments and really march well. Some of us, will struggle with everything going on, but we are out there, doing our best in our shiny, beautiful uniforms, to play God’s tunes and march to God’s beat that others might join in.

Mind you, there are some who get the uniform and they think it silly, ugly and not worthy of their beauty and status. They leave the practice field and go out to the wilds of the world so that eventually their uniform is tattered, torn, and no longer even recognizable as God’s uniform. Most of those living this way, in truth, find themselves naked in the world. They have either so tattered the gift of God that it falls off or they have willfully and angrily taken that uniform off because to them God is nothing and dumb and totally a waste of their time and talents in the world. Perhaps I should also mention those who join the other band that purports to be better and greater than God’s!

To speak of “receiving reconciliation” is the fact that you are happy about that uniform, and working, by God’s gracious love, to be a part of the marching band.

Now do you grasp why Christ died for us? Thank you Lord for this awesome gift of salvation and eternal life. Amen.