



Romans 5.⁶⁻¹¹

⁶For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ¹⁰For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. ¹¹And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

In this passage, it seems to me, Paul wishes to instill in us a sense of wonder about the extreme generosity of soul that Jesus possesses. In seeking us out to save us, he goes far, far beyond human norms and far beyond what we would expect. Humans go to war with those who act contrary to their interests. By the billions, humans have killed other humans with whom they were at enmity. Wrath has reigned between nations and individuals. To be sure, humans haven't gone out of the way to make life more pleasant for their enemies. They haven't been willing to die for their enemies, but to bring death to their enemies.

But Jesus acted exactly opposite to these human norms.

I am sometimes disappointed and saddened to see that some of our doctrines cause some to lose the sense of wonder at Jesus' generosity—doctrines surrounding a pre-mortal life, for example, or God's omniscience, or our alleged basic goodness. These sometimes make us feel that since he knew us beforehand and supposedly knew what we would do with the message of Christ and his atonement, he wasn't really going out on that much of a limb to love us, to offer himself to us, and to save us.

But, it isn't like Paul didn't believe in the omniscience of God. He was all too aware of the brazen ungodliness of humanity. Still, he was filled with a sense of wonder at and gratitude for the near profligate generosity God feels for and extends to us. When we come to realize that he, through suffering and death, offers himself to us as companion, friend, and savior even when we are at our very worst, we are drawn to him. Far from avoiding him due to shame, we seek his loving embrace. It is only in entering his embrace that we can hope to become something closer to our very best. Oh, yes, it is a wonder!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 28, 2024)