

GOD SENT HIS SON

Galatians 4:1-7

Key Verses: 4:4-5

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Today's passage is St. Paul's Christmas message. He says that God sent his Son to us at the right time. Why did God send his own Son to this world? Let us open our hearts and find out what Christmas really means to each of us!

I. WHEN THE SET TIME HAD FULLY COME (1-4)

In verses 1-3, Paul describes the situation of people under the law by using an analogy that was familiar to the Jewish audience. The New Living Translation (NLT) paraphrases it this way: "Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world."

So what is the point of Paul's analogy? Before we were saved by God's grace, we were under the supervision of the law. The law could not save us. It only told us what we did wrong. Think of it this way. We know the speed limit on I-81 is 65 Mph around here. It tells us when we keep the law and when we don't. The law cannot make us a good citizen. This is true with the law of God. The fact is that no one in this world can keep all the laws perfectly, 24/7. Not even one! (Ro 3:10) So if it were up to us, no one could become a child of God. Every one of us is doomed to hell. We have fallen and we cannot get up. But many people today choose to be under the law as they reject God's grace. This is what I mean. Many would say, "Why do I have to believe in God? I am a better person than most Christians. I pay taxes and I am nice to everyone. If anyone goes to heaven, it should be me." This sounds reasonable. Again however, no one is perfect in the eyes of God. No one is without sin, not Donald Trump, not Pope Francis, not even Mother Theresa. Everyone is doomed under the law. But something amazing happened to change everything. Something happened to change our status from death-row inmates to children of God, from slaves to sons of God. What happened?

Look at verse 4. "*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,...*" The "set time" here refers to the "right time set by God" (NLT). At the right time, God sent his Son to be our Lord and Savior. At the right time of God, the Son of God came to this world to save us from our slavery to sin and death, and to make us become children of God. It teaches us that the timing of Jesus' birth was perfect. Let us talk about timing here. The coming of the Messiah had been promised by God as early as in Genesis 3:15. But now it was finally God's time for the

Messiah to be born. While on earth, Jesus followed God's time schedule. He often said, "My time has not yet come" (Jn 2:4; 7:6). There is our time and there is God's time. Often they are not the same. Many times, we want God to do something for us right away. But God, in his infinite wisdom, chooses to wait for our good. He waited 25 years for Abraham to grow in faith before granting him a son. God is never late. He created this universe from nothing. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows all about our past and he can see what our future holds.

Just as God sent his Son at the perfect time, he continues to work in our lives at the right time. His timing is perfect. When the time had fully come, God sent his Son into this world. If God would do that for the world, he would certainly do that for us. He will work in our life at just the right time. Let us trust him in all situations. Knowing that God's timing is perfect, we can trust him for our future. Perhaps God is telling you that now is the time for you to commit your life to him. If so, may God help you to respond to him today, and may he meet you, just in time.

What else does verse 4 teach us? "*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,...*" We learn three things about Jesus. First, he is the Son of God. It means Jesus is God. Jesus is fully God. Second, Jesus was born of a woman. It means he was fully human, just like you and me. If you had pinched him in the arm, he would have said, "ouch!" Third, Jesus was born under law. He was circumcised under the Jewish law when he was eight days old. While on earth, he kept all the laws. He obeyed the speed limit when he rode on a donkey to Jerusalem. Most important, he committed no sin before God. He was the only person without sin in the history of the world (Heb 4:15; 1Jn 3:5).

So why is it important to us to know that God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law? Jesus is 100% God, 100% human and 100% sinless. Only Jesus has the power and authority to forgive our sins. Only Jesus can be a bridge between sinner and the Holy God. Jesus, the Son of God, gave up his heavenly glory to come down to this world as a tiny baby. He was born to a poor family and laid in a manger. Why? It was because we sinners could not come to the Holy God. So God himself came down to live with us and save us from our sin and death. John the Apostle was so moved by this amazing grace of God that he exclaimed: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

II. TO REDEEM THOSE UNDER LAW (5)

Look at verse 5. "*... to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*" There was more to that night in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago than a young virgin having a baby. God had more in mind than giving us a nice holiday to celebrate. God had a great purpose in sending his Son. He had planned this for a long time. Now the time was right. And he came. Why did the holy God have to come down to us, mere humans?

He came to redeem us. What does this mean? The term “redeem” was used in the slavery market at that time. It means to “buy out” a slave’s freedom by paying the price of his or her life. This means that Jesus came to buy us out of our slavery to sins. Indeed, he paid the highest price for our freedom. He paid it with his own life! We have heard this message many times before, but it must be repeated again and again so that we may never forget it. And this is the message: We were under the Law. We violated the law by committing sins. So we stood condemned. We were slaves to our sin. And we had no way of redeeming us on our own. So the Son of God came. Jesus died on the cross in our place, bearing all our sins on his shoulder. With the precious blood shed on the cross, he bought us out. He set us free from sin and death. Jesus came to redeem us. How wonderful news is that!

God has purchased our freedom. We are no longer in bondage to sin or the law. God opened the door of salvation for all sinners. Now, we have a choice to make--to accept God’s offer of salvation by believing in Jesus who finished the work of redemption on the cross, or to remain under the law, insisting we can do enough good things to earn our way to heaven. If you choose the second, you should know that you have to be perfect in keeping the law in order to be righteous. If we keep the whole Law and stumble in one point, the Scripture says that we become a lawbreaker. It only takes one rotten egg to spoil the whole omelet. It only takes a little sin to make us a sinner that is condemned. A preacher invited his audience to come forward to confess their sins. But one lady said, “I want to be saved but I am not a sinner.” He told her, “Then you cannot be saved, because Jesus only died for sinners.” Then she said, “Okay, but I am a good sinner.” She did not know that it takes only one small sin that a person becomes condemned eternally.

Do you admit you are a sinner? Great men like King David, St. Peter and St. Paul readily admitted that they were sinners before God. Paul was a Pharisee, meaning he kept all the Jewish laws from his childhood, from big ones like keeping the Sabbath and not taking the Lord’s name in vain to small ones like not wearing women’s clothing or not having a tattoo (#70 and 72 of the 613 *mitzvot*). But he got stuck on the last of the Ten Commandments, which says “Do not covet.” He tried really hard not to lust after his neighbor’s beautiful house or wife. But the more he tried, the more he lusted after them. His desires became more intense. He would slap himself and took many cold showers, but with no effect. Finally, he cried out: “Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?” (Ro 7:24 NLT) Paul tried everything and nothing helped. He was at the end of his rope. Then he met his savior and exclaimed, “Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro 7:25).

God is holy, and as the holy God of the universe, any sin is detestable to him. If we reject the way of Christ, we are condemned. It is a condemnation we deserve. For as sinners stand before a holy God, they will have to proclaim, “We are guilty as judged.” But the other choice gives us the privilege to stand before God justified, not because of anything we did, but because of the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. Our sin is placed to his account, and we stand in his righteousness. He came to redeem us. Praise Jesus who came to redeem us!

Look at verse 5 again. “... *to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*” This verse teaches us that Jesus came to give us the full rights of sons. What does this mean? It means that Jesus came to adopt us into God’s family. We are his sons. We have been placed into the family of God by the act of Christ. He came not only to forgive us of our sins, but to place us into his family. This is amazing grace indeed. Jesus did not merely forgive us and send us on our way. He made us sons of God. Now ladies and girls, don’t feel sorry because this verse mentions only sons, not daughters. In fact, you will be happy to know that Jesus made you sons of God. We need to know the customs of the Roman society to understand the full meaning of this. Under the Roman law, an adopted child had all legal rights as a son. He was not a second-class son. He was equal to biological sons. There was no distinction between them. As adopted sons of God through the blood of Jesus, we also have the full rights of sons (5). We will talk more about this in a minute. But let us remember how we received the full rights of God’s sons. We did not do anything to deserve this wonderful grace. We did not earn it. We did not keep 100% of all the laws to receive it. Instead, we received the grace of God by faith in Christ. We became children of God, “not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (Jn 1:13). It was all because what Jesus did for us. We can only thank him and love him for this amazing grace.

III. BECAUSE WE ARE HIS SONS (6-7)

Look at verses 6-7. “*Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*” We are God’s children. Because of Jesus, our status has been changed from slaves to sons. As his sons, we have certain privileges--the privileges that slaves do not have. What are some of these privileges?

First, sons of God call him “Abba, Father.” Paul says in verse 6, *Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”* The first thing that changed in our lives is our relationship with God. He is our Father. We call him affectionately, “Daddy!” On the other hand, slaves call their master “Master.” They would not dare to call their master “Father.” But we now have an intimate love relationship with our God. This new relationship is not based on some adoption papers. It is based on the Holy Spirit that moves our hearts. The Holy Spirit touches our hearts to believe that our sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus and we have been adopted into God’s family. Paul says in Romans 8: “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Ro 8:15-16). We are sons of God. Sons love the father and obey him out of love. Slaves obey their master out of fear.

Second, sons are free. Slaves are not free. We were slaves until Jesus came to set us free through his cross and resurrection. As the adopted sons of God, we are free. We have been set free to serve God and serve one another in love (5:13). As former slaves,

however, we need to be reminded that we are sons of God and we are free. Sometimes, we find ourselves thinking and acting like slaves. This happens when we forget the grace of God. For example, we might be slaves of our own emotions such as anger, jealousy, hatred and self-pity. We show symptoms of being a slave when we serve God's ministry grudgingly rather than out of love for God. We may be slaves of our pride and stubbornness. We may be slaves of legalism when we focus on keeping rules rather than building relationships in Christ. Let us not despair when we find the vestige of our old slave nature, but boldly come to God and cry by the Holy Spirit, "Abba, Father!" We are sons of God. We have been set free from our bondage to sin and death!

Third, sons have a future. Sons are heirs. Sons have a future; slaves do not. We have a bright future in God. Look at verse 7. *So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.* Paul says in Romans 8:17, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." If we are children, then we are heirs. Notice that not all humans become heirs automatically. We don't become heirs just because we are God's creation. Nor does it say that if children of Abraham, then heirs, as many Jews believed (Jn 8:44). The Bible also rules out baptism, church membership, and other works and credentials. Only if we are the children of God, then we are heirs. And if we are heirs, we have an inheritance. No, not some real estate property or buildings that will crumble eventually, or stocks and bonds whose values may plunge. The riches of the eternal Kingdom of God are ours through Christ. We must truly appreciate this privilege as the heirs of God. We are a son, a daughter, a child of the King. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ in the eternal kingdom of God. St. Peter says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ..." (1Pe 1:3-4).

These are the privileges we have as children of God. This is why Jesus came into this world some 2,000 years ago. On that Christmas night, even the angels could not contain their heavenly joy. They exclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (Lk 2:14). The time had fully come for Christ to be born. And the time will come again when Christ returns as he promised. Unfortunately, many people at that time missed the first Christmas because their hearts were preoccupied with things of this world. King Herod missed it. The innkeeper in Bethlehem missed it. Many religious leaders missed it even though they knew about the prophecy of his birth. Let us not make the same mistake. Let us invite the baby to our Christmas celebration. Let us not miss him in his Second Coming. Let us read the key verses 4-5 again. *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*