

Main Idea: God gave more than one gift to the world in connection with Christmas, a fact we tend to forget. Galatians 4:4-7 tells us about two very special gifts.

- I. God sent His Son (4-5).
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      2. The political conditions were right.
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      2. The person God sent was fully man.
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    - C. He came for a special purpose (5).
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      2. He did the work of adoption.
  - II. God sent His Spirit (6-7).
    - A. We possess the rights of a son.
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      2. He gives us assurance.
    - B. We possess the resources of an heir.
- Make It Personal: What have I done with God’s gifts?
1. What we have now is wonderful.
  2. What we will enjoy is beyond comprehension!

*Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-12*

On Tuesday my dad’s youngest brother slipped into eternity from his bed at the Cleveland Clinic. He’d had a lung transplant just a few years ago, and that lung had finally stopped working. My uncle Phil is the one who gave me my first full time job. We shared a lot of things. Our last name, our interest in Indian artifacts, history, sports. But one thing we didn’t have in common was Christ. He just wasn’t interested, didn’t see the need.

When my aunt put the phone to his ear the night before he died, I told him I loved him and urged him to put his trust in Christ who is the only One who can give us eternal life.

My aunt later told me that the day he took his last breath, which was Tuesday, their oldest daughter said to him, “Dad, I want to see you in heaven.”

“Yea, yea,” he said.

“But you have to come to Christ for forgiveness, no matter who you are. Have you?” she asked.

“Yes, I have. I will see you in heaven.”

My uncle is in the Lord’s hands now, and the Lord will do what is right and good. The reason I share this account with you is to raise a question.

Why do we urge people to put their trust in Christ? Of all the things we could talk about with someone on their death bed, or any other time for that matter, why talk about a person who lived two thousand years ago?

We’re going to celebrate that person’s birth in two days. What’s so special, so eternally vital, about Jesus Christ?

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC on 12/24/06.

There are many places in God's Word to which we could turn to that question. We could go to a Gospel, such as the one I just read, and see *how* Jesus was born, and we would be amazed.

But I've chosen an epistle which explains *why* He was born, the theological significance of His birth. Our focus will be Galatians 4:4-7, a text that shows that the Christ-child was born at *just the right time*. It also shows us that God gave more than one gift to the world in connection with Christmas, two very special gifts in fact. Let's listen to our text and then examine it carefully line by line:

*"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. Because you are 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 a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."*

*Context:*

The apostle Paul wrote Galatians in response to a controversy. Certain teachers (Judaizers) were infiltrating the churches that Paul had started in Galatia and were undermining their faith. How? By insisting that believing in Christ was not enough, that keeping God's law was essential for salvation. These professing Jewish Christians were insisting that Old Testament ceremonial practices (like circumcision) were still binding on the New Testament church. In short, the Gospel was under attack and Paul, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter to address that problem head-on.

He identified the source of the controversy in chapters one and two. In chapter three he issued the charge that *faith alone* is necessary for salvation, that the law can't save anyone (3:21), that the law is meant to lead a person to Christ (3:24), and that it's by faith in Christ that a person becomes a child of God (3:26).

This context is vital. As we come to chapter four, remember that Paul's argument is to show the connection between *our sonship* and *The Son*. If we have The Son, then we are sons. Nothing else is needed.

Why not? What is it about this Son that makes belief in Him sufficient to set a sinner free from bondage and furthermore, makes obedience to ceremonial laws unnecessary? Paul gives the answer in the text before us.

The truth is, God gave more than one gift to the world in connection with Christmas, a fact we tend to forget. Galatians 4:4-7 tells us about two very special gifts.

### I. God sent His Son (4-5).

Verse 4—"But when the time had fully come *God sent His Son.*" God, the Maker of heaven and earth, sent His Son into the world, and according to verses 4-5, His Son's coming is special in three ways.

**A. He came at a special time (4a).** "But *when the time had fully come*, God sent his Son..." When did God send His Son? When the time had *fully come*. When the fullness of time was come, as the AV puts it.

In its basic sense the word "fully" or "fullness" (*pleroma*) means "that which fills up." It carries the idea of completeness and fulfillment, that which is brought to completion. You might think of a glass into which you are pouring ice tea. When the tea reaches the top of the glass you say it is *full*. Fullness is the state of being full. Once the glass is full you stop pouring! Now it's time to start drinking.

Paul speaks of the 'fullness of *time*.' The Greek word for time is *chronos*. We derive the English word *chronology* from it. Chronology speaks of sequence. *This* happens, then *this*, then *this*, and so on.

When God sent His Son into the world He did so when the time was ripe, at just the perfect time. “What made the time so right?” you ask. The fact is, God had been preparing the world for the birthday of His Son for centuries (and He Himself had been preparing for it from eternity past!). Allow me to point out five evidences that He sent His Son at just the right time.

1. *The promises were right.* Scan the Old Testament and you’ll discover a thread of promises beginning in Genesis. Pull on that thread and it will take you to Bethlehem.

**A promise to Adam and Eve—Genesis 3:15**

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

**A promise to Abraham—Genesis 12:1-4**

“...all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.”

**A promise to Jacob—Genesis 28:14-15**

“...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.”

**A promise concerning Judah—Genesis 49:10**

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”

**A promise to Moses—Deut. 18:18**

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers.”

**A promise to David—2 Samuel 7:12-13**

“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

**A promise to Isaiah—Isaiah 7:14; 9:6**

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

**A promise to Micah—Micah 5:2**

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

**A promise to Daniel—Daniel 7:13-14; 9:25**

“From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’”

Galatians 4:4 can say, “When the time had fully come,” because the promises were right, and those are just a sampling of the promises God gave to His people centuries beforehand, to prepare the world for the arrival of His Son.

2. *The political conditions were right.* Jesus was born around 4 BC (in case you’re wondering why it’s *four* instead of *zero*, there are different possibilities, but one is because the calendar creators failed to account for leap years). At any rate, who ruled the world at that time? The Romans did. The Roman Empire was firmly established. If Jesus had come four hundred years earlier or later, he would have encountered a world in political turmoil. But in 4 BC there was *Pax Romana*, Roman peace by military control, and therefore political stability and security.

Furthermore, the Romans had developed an elaborate transportation system throughout their empire (parts still in use today). Why was this important? Because once Jesus returned to heaven, His followers would be able to take His message world-wide

using a developed road system, without being hindered by the all too common hindrances of war and political turmoil.

3. *The religious conditions were right.* This was true in two ways.

**For the Jews:** Tremendous changes took place in Judaism from 400 BC to the time of Jesus' birth. The Old Testament canon was settled. There was great interest in matters of theology, such as angels, the resurrection, life after death, the coming kingdom, and the Messiah. There were also a host of Jewish divisions or sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Samaritans, Zealots, Herodians, and more (almost like the denominationalism of today!)—and it all created a void, an emptiness in the hearts of people. What's more, the spread of Jewish synagogues throughout the world would later give the New Testament missionaries a beachhead from which to begin their evangelistic efforts.

**For Gentiles:** The Romans were polytheists, as were the Greeks before them. But after centuries of worshiping many gods, there was growing dissatisfaction and emptiness, for false gods can never satisfy the hunger the true God placed within us for Himself. And all this created an openness to new religious teachings.

4. *The social conditions were right.* Tensions were great between Rome and Israel. It climaxed in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. Roman persecution would eventually turn on the Christians as well, forcing them to scatter throughout the world, but of course, God used this as the fleeing Christians took the Gospel message with them wherever they went.

5. *The language was right.* The official and common language throughout the Roman Empire was *Koine Greek*. That meant you could travel from northern Africa to Jerusalem, to present day Turkey, to Greece, to Italy, even to Spain, and have conversations with people.

What's more, in 170 BC, the Old Testament Scriptures were translated from Hebrew into Greek in a translation called the *Septuagint (LXX)*. The Septuagint was developed because so many Jews no longer understood Hebrew, but that translation meant that the early church now had a Bible that anyone in the Roman Empire could read! Furthermore, the common language meant that as New Testament Scriptures were written, they were immediately readable—no translation needed.

Indeed, the stage was set. God had prepared the world for His Son. He sent His Son at just the *right time*. And may I remind you that this same God is in control of your life, of your chronology? That's why you can trust Him fully. Indeed, He tells you to trust Him fully and "lean not to your own understanding" (Prov 3:5-6).

Something else made His Son's coming special. First, He came at a special time.

**B. He came as a special person (4b).** "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law." In that short statement we learn three things about this person that God sent.

1. *The person God sent was fully God.* "God sent *His Son*." As His Son He possesses the very nature of His Father. See the deity of this special person in those words. Jesus Himself would later say, "I and my Father are one (John 10:30)."

2. *The person God sent was fully man.* "Born of a woman," Paul declares. To use the Greek word, "born of a *gynaikos*," a term which distinguishes human gender, "born of an *adult female*." A human being, a woman, gave birth to God's Son. The fact that He was *God's Son* reveals His deity. The fact that He was born of a woman reveals His *humanity*. God actually became a man, and that man continued to be God. The God-man. 100% God. 100% man.

3. *The person God sent was fully obedient.* Verse 4 concludes, "born *under law*." What does that mean?

Fourteen centuries before Jesus came God had given His Law through Moses to His people. God's Law revealed His glory. It also showed His people how they could reflect His glorious character to the onlooking world, by obeying that law, by living under that law.

Israel failed, but the Son did not fail. He was born *under law*, for He entered the world as a Jew. He lived *under law*, for by His righteous life this Son fulfilled the righteous requirements God's law established, something sinful human beings are unable to do.

Jesus possessed all three traits. He had to if He was to fix man's problem. He had to be divine in order to give His sacrifice infinite value. He had to be human for since human beings sinned, a human being had to bear the penalty for sin. And He had to be born *under law*, for it was God's law that sinners had violated and it was the righteousness of that law that needed to be upheld.

Yes, He came at a special time, and as a special person. And why?

**C. He came for a special purpose (5).** Verse 4 states that God *sent* His Son. The verb is *exapostello* which means "to send out for some purpose." Verse 5 identifies the purpose: "...to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Note the purpose indicators. God sent His Son "TO redeem," and "THAT we might receive." God sent His Son to accomplish two very specific works.

1. *He did the work of redemption.* The Son was born *under law* (verse 4) in order to *redeem those under law* (verse 5). The word *redeem* is *exagorazomai* which means 'to buy,' 'to buy up,' literally 'to buy back,' 'to recover by payment of a price from the power of another.'

That raises the question. From whose power did Christ set us free? To whom were we slaves. Other passages speak of man's enslavement to the devil (Heb. 1:14). But here Paul refers to those who were enslaved to *the law*. He says that Christ died to *redeem those under law*.

You might be thinking, "I didn't know that God's law was a master that held people in bondage." Indeed, it was. Let me illustrate.

We enter this world as sinners, and as sinners we by nature think this world exists for us. It's our bent. Furthermore, we live that way. That's why when we're but three-years-old we get upset if our toddler friend takes our toy. That's also why as an adult, if we're late for an appointment, we convince ourselves we have the "right" to drive whatever speed we need to drive to make our appointment. And we feel pretty good about our efforts... *until* we see something. We notice along the side of the road a posted sign that reads: '35 mph.' Then we see another one: '55 mph.' Each time we see a sign a master speaks to us, a master called *the law*. The law says, "Don't drive faster than this. If you disobey there will be a penalty."

But there's a big difference between civil law and God's moral law. I can obey the civil law regardless of how I feel about the law-maker (I can make myself go 35 mph even if I'm grumbling while doing it—Uncle Sam doesn't care my motive as long as I obey). But obedience to God's law requires a proper heart as well as obedience. Indeed, obedience to God's law is supposed to be a reflection of my love for God and others.

And there's my problem. As a sinner I don't naturally love God and others. I'm infatuated with myself, so my tendency is to try and use God and others to get what I want out of life.

But every time I open the pages of God's Word and read the 'road signs', I'm reminded of my bondage. I cannot keep God's law. The problem isn't God's law, for it is good. The problem is *me*. I am a slave to the law for I am a slave to sin.

Is there any hope? Yes, but it's not in what I can do, or what you can do. It's in what God has done. God sent His Son *to redeem those under law*, that is, 'to recover by payment of a price from the power of another.' And what was the payment price? What did it cost this Son to redeem prisoners like you and me?

Paul answered that question in the previous chapter, in Galatians 3:13. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" After living a perfect life, this Son allowed wicked men to nail Him to a wooden cross where He became a curse in order to redeem sinners from the curse. He died in the place of sinners. Three days later God made it clear His Son's redemption price was sufficient by raising Him from the dead.

That's why the Son came to earth. And that's what He accomplished by virtue of His coming, the work of redemption. Have you put your trust in the work the Redeemer accomplished? Why not now?

The second purpose is a consequence of the first.

2. *He did the work of adoption.* "God sent His Son...to redeem those under law, *that we might receive the full rights of sons.*" The NIV uses the phrase, 'the full rights of sons,' but that's one word in the Greek text, *huiiothesia*. It means 'adoption' or 'sonship.' One lexicon offers this definition: "to formally and legally declare that someone who is not one's own child is henceforth to be treated and cared for as one's own child, including complete rights of inheritance."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps you're thinking, "No way! How could God just declare me to be His own child and now treat and care for me as such? I don't deserve that. I was a slave, a disobedient slave at that!"

No you don't deserve that, nor do I. But that's what God says we have if we have His Son, my friend. We have been redeemed, and therefore we have been adopted into His family. This is our identity now. We are redeemed. We are adopted. That's true of us and of every other person who has received this gift the Father sent.

As good as that is, there's more! Did you ever finish opening your gifts Christmas morning, get busy with plans for dinner, and not discover until later, maybe during cleanup time, that you had missed a gift? Well, there's another gift associated with Christmas that's often neglected. So let's unwrap this second package together.

It's in verses 6-7, "Because you are sons, God sent [that's the same verb used in verse 4 referring to the Son] the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

God sent His Son, the first gift. God sent His Spirit, the second gift.

## II. God sent His Spirit (6-7).

I must hasten to say that these two gifts are inseparably related. God sent His Son, and He likewise sent the Spirit of His Son, a reference to the Holy Spirit who came just days after the Son returned to heaven. The Son came at Christmas. The Spirit came at Pentecost.

Here Paul says that "God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts." When did that happen? Keep in mind He's talking to Christians. The moment a person becomes God's son through faith in His Son, that person receives the Holy Spirit. Again, Paul says that God *sent the Spirit into our hearts*. So if you have God's Son, you then have the Spirit of His Son living in you, the wonderful Holy Spirit.

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<sup>2</sup>Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (LN 35.53). New York: United Bible societies.

Sadly, it's possible to have something yet not know the value of what you have. This is often the case with this particular gift. What do we have if we have the Holy Spirit? Two amazing privileges.

**A. We possess the rights of a son.**

Have you ever been the guest of a friend during a holiday get-together? How did you feel? Depending on how well you knew the family, probably at little awkward at first, maybe even confused at the way they did things, quite possibly you felt out of place, like when they took the 'family' picture which did not include you.

We used to be on the outside of God's family, but no longer. Because of the Son, we are sons. Because of the Spirit, we can experience the rights of a son. Paul mentions two.

1. *He gives us intimacy with God.* Verse 6—"God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'" The Spirit 'calls out' in our behalf. The verb 'call out' is strong. It (*krazo*) means to shout, to scream, to cry out, to exclaim. And what specifically does the Spirit cry out? *Abba, Father.*

*Abba.* That's the Aramaic word a little child would use when jumping into his father's lap, "Daddy!" If you'll recall, that's also the word Jesus used when He prayed this prayer from Gethsemane in Mark 14:36, "'Abba , Father, he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'"

Since God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, it's not surprising that He is now calling out the same from within us, "Abba, Father!" This is one of the greatest privileges families enjoy. *Communication.* We share personal, meaningful, and significant thoughts with those we trust. We laugh together. We cry together.

And the Spirit enables us to do that with God. He enables us to experience personal and intimate communion with the Almighty God. Do we take advantage of this privilege? Is intimate communication with God a priority to us? Do we carve out time daily with Him? Do we protect the weekly time we have to meet with His forever family?

2. *He gives us assurance.* Note again what the Spirit calls out. *Abba, Father.* He enables us to call God *our Father.*

I can't give you assurance of your salvation. You can't give it to me. But the Holy Spirit can and does. Paul elaborates in Romans 8:15, "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.'"

Unfortunately, some people have assurance that ought NOT have it. They're convinced they're in God's family, but the basis of this conviction is what the preacher says, or what their signed prayer card says, or what the church says, or what momma says. But there's one voice that's silent, and it's the one that matters.

Dear friend, if Christ is your Savior, the Holy Spirit will make it clear to you that you are a child of God, and He will use His Word to give you that assurance. If you lack assurance, ask the Spirit for help. Study the Book He has inspired and given us, particularly the epistle of 1 John. By so doing the Holy Spirit will do one of two things:

1) He may show that the reason you lack assurance of sonship is because you are not a son. Or...

2) He may use His Word to take away your lack of assurance and give you assurance that you are indeed a son because you know the Son!

Because God sent His Spirit to us we possess the rights of a son, and His Spirit gives us the assurance of these rights. Because of the Spirit, we enjoy a second privilege.

**B. We possess the resources of an heir.** Verse 7 again, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." We used to be

slaves, but now we are sons. That's our position. And with the position goes the possession. We are *heirs*. The word means "a receiver." An heir is one who is entitled to receive something.

What does an heir of God receive? Paul answers that question for us 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*."

There is the inheritance that the sons of God anticipate. It's the very inheritance that The Son possesses. What is it? It's suffering now, glory later. We can expect to suffer now, and we will certainly share in *His glory* later.

*When all my labors and trials are o'er,  
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,  
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.*

*Refrain:*

*Oh, that will be glory for me,  
Glory for me, glory for me,  
When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory, be glory for me.*

*When, by the gift of His infinite grace,  
I am accorded in heaven a place,  
Just to be there and to look on His face,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.*

*Friends will be there I have loved long ago;  
Joy like a river around me will flow;  
Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.<sup>3</sup>*

#### Make It Personal: What have I done with God's gifts?

We've been talking about two gifts the Father has given in connection with Christmas. Now please ponder a couple of questions...

One, have you received the Father's first gift, namely His Son, Jesus Christ? If so, then you are a member of royalty. You are a child in God's family. If not, why not today? Jesus Christ came to earth and went to the cross to pay the penalty for your sin. Receive Him as your Savior and you will receive the assurance of eternal life.

And if you have received the first gift, then you already possess the second gift the Father sent. If you have the Son, then you also have His Spirit living in you, the Holy Spirit. You are a member of God's family. But that brings us to a second question...

Two, are you experiencing what the Spirit offers? He offers family intimacy in the family of God, and He offers assurance of sonship. He assures us that God has declared us to be His heirs. These are ours because the Spirit has come.

Dear friends, if we possess these two amazing gifts, know this.

- 1. What we have now is wonderful. Yet...*
- 2. What we will enjoy is beyond comprehension!*

Baptism to follow – Colton Wilson will be baptized by his father Matt Wilson

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Gabriel, "O That Will Be Glory," around 1900