

CHRISTMAS HAS MADE YOU A CHILD OF GOD

I. Your Status as a Child of God

II. How You Got Here

Galatians 4:1-7

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2020 | CHRISTMAS

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

<i>Old Testament</i>	Isaiah 11:1-5
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 103
<i>New Testament</i>	Galatians 4:1-7
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 2:25-40

COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS & MEDFORD

1. A Hymn – 125 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
16. Chief Hymn – 147 While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night
27. Distribution Hymns – 137 O Little Town of Bethlehem
34. Closing Hymn – 134 Let Us All with Gladsome Voice

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Galatians 4:1–7 (CSB)

4 Now I say that as long as the heir is a child, he differs in no way from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. ² Instead, he is under guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elements of the world. ⁴ When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.

Dear fellow redeemed: Our Gospel lesson today tells of Mary and Joseph fulfilling three commands given in Moses’ law: (1) On the eighth day, Jesus was circumcised and given the name “Jesus,” which means “Savior.” (2) On the 33rd day Mary was ceremonially purified, and (3) Jesus was presented to the Lord and redeemed.

Each of these was significant, especially the first and the last. (1) By circumcision, Jesus entered into the covenant that God made with Abraham, choosing him and his descendants as the bearers of His word in the world. (2) By her purification, Mary was obedient to the ceremonial law. (3) The presentation and redemption of Jesus pointed back to the Passover, at which all the firstborn males in Egypt died, except that God spared the Jews who put the blood of the lamb above and beside their doors. Because God did not take them in death, they belonged to Him, and therefore needed to be paid for. It made them remember their status as the people belonging to God.

Think of what that means, to belong to God, because that is what our Epistle lesson is about also.

In the churches of Galatia, spread about the south-central region of the Roman province of Asia, rivals of Paul and the apostles had come in who had a great appreciation for what it meant to be the people of God, and they looked at things like these rules as the way in which people could become the people of God.

What a thing to aspire to! What a reason to be observant of the laws of Moses! But in fact they missed the point completely. I can tell you that YOU are people of God, not because of what you have done, but because of what Christ has done for you, and He has made you His children by faith. So then let me tell you how through the birth of Christ, ...

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God created families. He decreed that a man and a woman would participate with him in the creation of new human life, and that this would bring into being a wonderful relationship of husband and wife, blessed to be Father and Mother to sons and daughters. Parents, especially Fathers, have responsibilities, and sons and daughters have privileges. The Bible uses the term “son” rather than “child” or “children” because of this relationship. I can call anybody a child, but in all the world only five people my son or my daughter.

You are a son/daughter of God because you have been adopted into God’s family. A price was paid for you. You were redeemed. **⁴ When the time came to completion, God sent**

his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. We will talk about that more in a minute, but let's talk about how you didn't get here.

Paul presents us with a picture of a child. **4 Now I say that as long as the heir is a child, he differs in no way from a slave, though he is the owner of everything.² Instead, he is under guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.**

Paul is poking holes in the arguments of the rival teachers who said that by keeping the rules we could become people of God. What made this child a son or heir? Was it the way he was subordinate? Or was he subordinate because he was a son? The child was a son because he was born to his father, and therefore under guardians and trustees. (When I was a child I didn't do chores to become a son. As a son I had chores to do.)

In the previous chapter, Paul had made the point that Abraham became a son of God by God's promise to him, and the Spirit's gift of faith. ***"So then, does God give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law? Or is it by believing what you heard—just like Abraham who believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness?"*** (Galatians 3:5–6, CSB) And so the observant Jews became Abraham's children – God's sons – also by faith in the promise. It was 400 years later, under Moses that the rules were given to the people who were already the children of God!

Paul went on, ***"You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons."*** (Galatians 3:7, CSB) God acts to make you sons/daughters of God by faith.

Think about what this means. Whatever your situation in this world, by faith you are a child of God. It means you can come to Him as a dear child comes to a dear father. It means that whatever your situation in this world, God has entered into this world to save you. It means that you have an inheritance in heaven. It means that you have a place prepared for you there, for all things are yours.

II. How You Got Here

The rivals who thought they became the children of God by their works really were exchanging sonship for slavery, weren't they? They confused the obedience that showed they were sons, with the means to becoming sons. But their slavery was to the law of Moses. In the case of the gentiles, ***³In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elements of the world.***

The "elements of the world" probably means all of the desires of this world, all of the temptations, all of the things which humanity loves, or fears, or trusts, all of the things that are in conflict with the truth, God's word. Unlike the Jews, who thought righteousness, goodness, and salvation could be found in obedience to the laws of Moses, the gentiles are enslaved to the things of this world in their search for heaven on earth.

We certainly see it in our day, as people seek acceptance and power and a wonderful new world by rejecting the family and seeking "self-actualization" (selfish whims). They seek a new world order in which benevolent experts plan out our lives "for our own good," and in which people of faith are accused of anti-science superstition. Essentially, it is the belief that the material world is all that there is.

The Jews did not find life and salvation in their observance of the law, nor do the secularists and humanists find peace and joy in their enslavement to the elements of this world.

The Jews did not become the sons of God by the law, nor did the gentiles find life and light through unbelief.

Instead God invaded this world at Christmas and He made us sons & daughters. **⁴When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.**

The term “redemption” had many uses in Paul’s world. Essentially it means “buy back.” In the ancient world those in debt had their possessions sold, and then even themselves, sold on the slave-market to pay the debt. If someone stepped in to pay the debt, they then redeemed or “bought back” the debtor as their slave.

What we owe before God’s justice is perfect righteousness, and the debt to be paid is death. Jesus entered this world, under this law, to live out our righteousness and to die our death. Thus he paid the price, fulfilled the debt, and redeemed us all.

But it didn’t stop there. He redeemed us. He bought us back NOT to make us HIS slaves, but to ADOPT us as sons/daughters. ...**so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.**

We are joint-heirs, brothers and sisters, with Christ. His holiness is ours. His resurrection is ours. The love of the Father for Him is also ours. His life is ours. His glory is ours. It all started at Christmas, when “the time came to completion,” at the birth of Jesus, the Christ. In this way, **CHRISTMAS HAS MADE YOU A CHILD OF GOD**

AMEN.