

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

⁴But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

This is God's Word for God's people.

Dear Fellow Children of God,

It is fun to give and to get Christmas presents. My grandkids couldn't wait to open and then start playing with their gifts. But what about 6 months from now? Are they still as excited by these gifts or are they gathering dust on a shelf somewhere? It seems like something sort of like that had happened to the Galatians. Paul had shared the good news of the gospel with them and the Holy Spirit had created faith in their hearts. But sometime later they were chasing after something else. They had forgotten just how wonderful God's gift of salvation was and were getting caught up in a religion of faith and work righteousness which was taking them down a path away from God. So Paul writes tis letter to remind them and to remind us that we have received a special gift from God.

God has given us two great Christmas Gifts:**I. The gift of redemption****II. The gift of adoption.**

I. Sometimes the best gifts are the ones which are hand made. They have that personal touch that comes from the heart and adds just a little touch of love. The person who likes to make their own gifts has to set up a schedule so they are finished on time. Paul points out that God sent Jesus into the world at just the right time to complete his gift of redemption for us. This was a time of God's choosing when the conditions and timing in the world were just perfect. This was God's schedule

The Romans dominated the known world and brought general peace and safety to most of the lands they occupied. They had built a tremendous road system which greatly improved the ability to travel so news traveled quickly and to many parts of the world. The Greek language and culture had given a certain cohesion to society. The old Greek and Roman gods were losing their hold on society and the people were hungering for a more satisfying religion. Among the Jewish people the Law of Moses given on Mt. Sinai had been at work for 1300 years and the Jewish people longed for the Promised Messiah.

So, at this perfect time in history, God sent his Son into the world to redeem the world because Jesus was the only one qualified for the job. It had to be God's Son because only Jesus, as true God, was able to pay for the sins of the whole world for all time. But Paul also points out that God's Son was **"born of a woman."** This means he was also true man and that was very necessary so that he could suffer and die for the sins of the whole world.

Paul also notes that Jesus was born under the law. This tells us Jesus was born to a Jewish mother and therefore was part of the Jewish nation. He was subject to the laws established by God through Moses on Mt. Sinai. He kept every one of those laws for us – laws that were impossible for a normal person to keep all the time. Laws that God gave to show his people how much they needed a Savior – laws that still show us how much we need a Savior. As Jesus kept those laws perfectly, he did this as our substitute – doing what we can't and at the same time providing more and more proof that he was the promised Messiah. But when he came into the world not everyone welcomed him.

King Herod wanted to kill him and eventually Jesus would be put to death by his own people but the time for that was 33 years in the future – again a time of God's choosing. But this reminds us that not every one today is happy to hear about Jesus either. There are plenty of people that don't have time for God and reject Jesus as their Savior. They believe that religion restricts them. How ironic that those who reject Jesus Christ are slaves to their sins. Their sins guide and control their lives and they miss the freedom from sin which the redemption of Christ brings us.

We, too, at times let our sins control our lives. Maybe it's greed or sexual sins or gluttony or revenge or hatred. Temptation has a way of snaring us and pulling us in. But those sins only bring sorrow and an emptiness of life. They can never bring contentment and true satisfaction.

Thank God for the gospel which points us to God's great gift of love – his Son – this baby born under the law to redeem us and bring us forgiveness for our sins. That is a gift that keeps on giving to us every day of our lives. A gift like no other. That is God's wonderful gift of redemption! But there's more.

II. We have also been adopted. Ask anyone living in an orphanage or foster home what they want more than anything else in the world and they will tell you they want to be adopted or they want to be part of a family.

When we were born, we were not part of God's family. We were born as outsiders and enemies of God. But God adopted us in spite of who we were. He sent the Spirit through Baptism and his Word to create faith in our hearts. This faith brought us into God's family and made us one of his children. We aren't outsiders any more. We have been adopted and as members of God's family we share in the benefits. Our adoption brings us the forgiveness of sins, life (both spiritual and eternal), and the key to God's heavenly mansion.

We now use the language of children talking to their Father rather than of a slave talking to their master. We obey and follow God's guidance because we recognize his love for us and want to show our love in return through obedience. Unlike the slave who obeys out of fear of punishment. As God's Children we are also heirs inheriting eternal life.

Occasionally the media will report about a sports figure who has returned to his hometown and done something to help the community because they didn't want to forget where they came from and they wanted to say thank you to all the people that helped them as they were growing up and maybe help some other youngster who is growing up.

We want to come and hear the Gospel on a regular basis so we don't forget where we came from either. So that we consider that we were once headed for eternal strife but God turned things around for us by bringing us into his family. As we hear the gospel look for ways to help the Christian community. There are many opportunities to serve here at Beautiful Savior – ways in which to say thank you to God for all that he has given you. That can be through your gifts of money, through prayers, by serving on boards and committees, singing in the choir, ushering and so many different ways.

This truly has been a blessed Christmas for all of us. We have received so much but the greatest gifts have come from our God. The gift of Redemption and the gift of Adoption. These are gifts that truly keep on giving.

What did you get for Christmas? I got Jesus as my Savior. I got forgiveness for my sins and the sure hope of everlasting life in heaven. I got the best gift in the world. Amen.