

**Galatians 4:4-7 (CSB):** *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.*

Why do we spend time with our families at Christmas? That seems like an odd question, doesn't it? It's what we've always done. It is a good time to spend with family because we love them. We get good food. We get to give gifts and receive gifts. The reasons seem to go on and on. We have many reasons to spend time with family at Christmas. This year has not been the same. We haven't been able to spend as much time with family that we would like. But, we are together now with a greater family. We are together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, was making this exact point. We are together with our family on Christmas. Jesus made us part of God's family, so we have the rights of a family member.

The church in Galatia faced a problem, they were confusing law and gospel. They were tricked into believing that they had to keep parts of the ceremonial law. Paul wrote to them to give them a stern warning. “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” The church in Galatia was qualifying the gospel. “God has saved you as long as you are circumcised and follow all the festivals.” See the problem? They took the good news of salvation, that God sent his Son into the world to save us from our sins, and made it so it wasn't enough. So, Paul sets up a series of arguments demonstrating that Christians are free from the law. One argument Paul makes is from an analogy. He tells this story of a son who was to receive the inheritance, but he is too young. So, before he receives the inheritance he is under guardians and trustees. He's treated no different than a slave.

Now, before we go much further, we need to understand what Paul is saying here. The son is always a member of the family. He has the inheritance; he just doesn't get to enjoy the full use of it until the time set by his father. Before then, there are those who are over him, keeping the inheritance safe. These people are guardians and trustees.

Now, just like the son had to live under a guardian, our heavenly Father set a time for his people to be under the law. The laws, religious festivals, and sacrifices were for their benefit. They served a purpose for a time. Then, “the time came to completion.” Our heavenly Father's time had come. Everything served its purpose. So, “God sent his Son.” The word “sent” tells us God sent his Son out on a mission. He gave him the very important mission “to redeem those under the law.” Jesus redeemed us, he bought us back. The price to buy us from the law was very costly. It took three things: his blood, suffering, and death. He bled as our one time sacrifice, because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. He suffered at the hands of Roman soldiers as they beat him up and mocked him. He gave his life on the cross. Here, Paul points to how Jesus was born of a woman and born under the law. He was born of a woman. Jesus is true man. This led to him being able to suffer, bleed, and die for us. He was also born under the law. He was born still under the Sinaitic code. He followed all the sacrifices,

ceremonial laws, all commands that were given in Leviticus. He kept the law perfectly in our place. And this happened “so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

Adoption is such an amazing thing. In the movie, *Annie*, the main character (Annie) lived a hard life in an orphanage. The lady who ran the orphanage was abusive and an alcoholic. The children there had hard chores and lived a difficult life, some might say a Hard Knocked Life. But everything turned around when billionaire Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks takes-in Annie to improve his self-image, but later he truly loves her and adopts her. Outside of God’s family, our lives were horrible. We were slaves to sin, death, and the devil. But, Jesus redeemed us, bringing us into God’s family, a family greater than Daddy Warbucks. Jesus had something more valuable than money; he had his own blood. Jesus never did this for his own self-image, but out of pure love for you.

This is the good news of great joy that we have. God sent his Son to buy us back so that we become a part of God’s family. But, just like the Galatians, we let the world and other people cut in on our race. “I must be A pretty good Christian. Look at how I took care of my family.” We make it a priority around Christmas to go through all the preparations and gift buying to make our family happy. While God wants us to take care of our family, our earthly family becomes more important to us than our own hearts preparation for Christmas. When we let other things or people cut in our focus of the race, our focus on God. We’re telling God, “My earthly family is more important than my eternal family.”

This is why God kept his set time to send his Son to be born of a woman and born under the law. He bought us back, adding us to the family. There is nothing about what we do, even if we do treat our family kindly, that can help us out. And that is why Jesus was born under law. He did everything perfectly in our place. We’re free from the law because we are redeemed children of God. You are part of God’s family.

Annie, when she was made a part of Oliver Warbucks’ family, was finally a part of a family. She received love from this billionaire, and she got everything that comes with being a part of the family. For Annie, being a part of the family meant receiving her famous red dress and getting a big fancy room. Just like Annie, we were adopted. Not by a billionaire, but by our heavenly Father. What’s greater? We’re a part of his family. God clothes us with the robes of righteousness and gives us our own mansion in heaven. And the Apostle Paul made sure we knew that we are a part of God’s family with full rights. He said, “we are no longer slaves but sons, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.”

Seems a little exclusive to say that we are all sons, doesn’t it? Would that mean women are excluded? Not at all! To understand what Paul is saying, it is important to know what the role of the son was in the family. The son received the inheritance. Why Paul calls us sons? It’s to give us the assurance that we all receive the inheritance.

And God has made us all sons. Since we are sons, that means that we are heirs. That “if” isn’t something that’s uncertain. There isn’t some condition. It’s more of a statement of assurance. Since you are sons, you are heirs. Heaven is something that is made yours because God sent his Son that first Christmas to redeem you, purchase you to be a part of his family.

Because we are a part of his family, the inheritance is ours. We have the best family ever. God gives us greater things than Oliver Warbucks could ever give.

As a part of God's family, the greatest thing we receive is eternal life together with our everlasting Father in heaven and with our brother Jesus Christ. The next best thing we get to enjoy is time with our brothers and sisters in Christ on this earth. We are a family. We might not all be in the same building as some are worshiping online and some are here in Verona, and some are in Monroe. But, we get to be together as a family on Christmas as we are all together in God's Word.

Paul speaks of that unity. He wrote, "God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.'" That word "Abba" is the Aramaic word of Father. That word "Father" was written in Greek. Paul shows that there was a unity between the Jews and Greeks, where typically there was division and hostility. That's because they are all one family. Today, we get to spend time with our family, celebrating that Son who was sent to bring us into God's family. We have the best family ever. That family which was made ours through Jesus. Because we are a part of that family, we have the full rights. Enjoy the fact that despite our circumstances, we get to be with our family at Christmas. Amen.