

Second Sunday after Christmas

January 3, 2016

Galatians 4:4-7

Christ's Obedience Redeemed Us from Slavery for Sonship

Rev. George Ferch

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

We all made many preparations over the past couple of weeks. Those preparations all had purpose; to celebrate our Savior's birth, or perhaps to entertain family and friends on New Year's Eve or Day. We had to be sure everything was ready and in place.

This is what the apostle Paul means with the phrase "but when the time had fully come," or in KJV, "when the fullness of the time was come." God the Father had made all preparations. Everything was ready and in place. "I will send my Son."

There was purpose here as well; to redeem the world from slavery for sonship. Jesus would do that by his perfect obedience under the law as the Christ. There is our theme: Christ's Obedience Redeemed Us from Slavery for Sonship. God the Father sent his Son into the world with purpose. God the Holy Spirit enables us to call God, Father.

As true man, "born of a woman," Jesus was "born under law." With all people, God the Father required his Son to keep the law holy without breaking one commandment. Jesus could do that as the Christ, also true God. Christ's obedience applied to the accounts of all the unrighteous since we cannot keep the law holy ourselves.

This Righteous One's obedience on behalf of us unrighteous ones through our disobedience is the price the Son paid to his Father in order to release us from slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil. This is redemption, literally, to buy out of the marketplace. Jesus bought and paid for us all "not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death."

Herein lies the purpose for God's preparation- the first gospel in Eden, saving Noah and his family, establishing a covenant with Moses and the new covenant with Abraham, the sending of the prophets up through John the Baptist. All this preparation got things ready for the revelation of Jesus Christ as "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel."

The Son of God became the Son of Man to "redeem those under the law." God the Son came then to redeem you. God requires you to keep all the commandments holy and never sin in order to go to heaven.

This is an impossible requirement. You have not been holy of course. You cannot keep the commandments perfectly. If you say claim to be without sin, you deceive yourself and the truth is not in you. The good news is you do not have to keep the commandments holy, Jesus did it for you. Your anger, your worry, your lust, your spiritual laziness do not condemn you. God condemned Jesus in your place for those sins.

St. John adds, "We have one who speaks in our defense-Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." [1John 2:2]

Christ's obedience redeemed us so that sin no longer enslaves us under "the basic principles of this world." Death cannot defeat us or lay claim to us. Satan cannot force us to do his will or serve him. Earlier Paul wrote, "You are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." That is why Christ redeemed us from slavery-FOR SONSHIP.

Christ redeemed us, "that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Earlier Paul had described the situation in ancient times. The tutors and guardians treated the heir of an estate the same as a slave child until the father decided to endow the inheritance.

So it was with us. We were slaves to sin, death and hell until our Father in heaven gave us redemption through Christ's obedience. Now we no longer are slaves but sons. Since we are sons, we are heirs of all spiritual blessings especially the forgiveness of our sins.

We reflect this in the Service of the Word liturgy. We confess our sins. We plead for God's mercy. God the Holy Spirit enables us to call God, Father. The pastor says in absolution of our sin, "God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. **YOU ARE HIS OWN DEAR CHILD.** May God give you strength to live according to his will."

"God sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father." Because the Holy Spirit does that in our hearts, it is evident that we are no longer slaves but sons. For the Jews and the Gentiles Paul used both the Aramaic and the Greek for "Father."

Our full rights as sons include the expectation of undeserved love our Father has promised. God listens to and answers our prayers. He provides our daily bread and protects us with his holy angels. We have the inheritance awaiting us of perfect righteousness, blessedness, and peace from all evil and its results in heaven at God's right hand. We receive everything Jesus received for his eternal glory as a true man. The only thing we won't share is a divine nature.

This is a great text as we begin the New Year and anticipate the Epiphany of our Lord this Wednesday. Whatever days that lie ahead, we live as the children of God with all the rights and privileges that brings. We are not slaves who must live in fear and uncertainty under the cruel whims of their masters.

Rather we live with the Holy Spirit in our hearts daily crying out to our Father. We do that as one in Christ whether Gentile or Jew for God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem the whole world. We join the Gentile Magi to come to our Savior and bow down in worship and offer him the love of all my heart, all my soul, and all my mind. Amen. <SDG>