

January 4, 2004
Christmas 2

"Every Day Blessings from a Triune God"

GALATIANS 4:4-7

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

Every time we gather for worship in this New Year we do so in the name of the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We start by saying, "The grace our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you." Or we may begin with the words from our baptism, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then we close our worship with a benediction, usually the words, "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace." Just as our worship is neatly sandwiched between two references to the Triune God, every day of your life in this New Year will begin and end with blessings from the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I grew up in an environment in which people wished each other good luck on almost every occasion, whether playing in sports or going into the hospital for major surgery. Your life this coming year is not lived under a giant roulette wheel that spins round and round and where she stops nobody knows. You live each day under the blessings of the Triune God. This morning we want to use the words just read to you from Galatians to see our **"Every Day Blessings from a Triune God."**

1) We stand in awe of a Father who sent his Son

First, we are privileged to face every new day of life on this earth awed and amazed at the mighty God who would send his Son to this earth for people like us. "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son..." In his infinite wisdom and love our heavenly Father knew the right time to send his Son. Looking back at history we can see how the world at the time of Jesus' birth was ideally suited for his coming into our world. The spread of the Greek language enabled people to talk to each other in a common language. The Roman roads and Roman peace enabled people to travel freely and carry on commerce openly. The Jews had reached a point in their history where they were crying out in anguish for the Messiah to come. At fullness of time, at the right time, God sent his Son.

The Lord is always in control. God told Abraham. I am God Almighty. I am El-Shaddai. The Lord had promised a son to Abraham in his old age. Did the Lord give Abraham this son nine months after the promise was made? No it took almost 25 years for the promised to be fulfilled. God's timetable for your life and mine is always the best. Is this the year the Lord will call some of us sitting here home to the place Jesus has prepared for us? That's OK. The Lord is in control. Will this be your year to have a serious illness come into your life? The Lord is able to rearrange the events the way we take down the Christmas

decorations and rearrange the furniture in our home.

The Father sent forth his Son. Our finite human minds cannot even begin to fathom the infinite glory and closeness that existed from all eternity between our heavenly Father and Jesus his Son. That glory and closeness is captured for us in the important phrase, "God so love the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." The word "only begotten" does not mean the Father created the Son. It refers instead to that closeness that Jesus had with his Father from all eternity. Someone once asked me the hypothetical question, "If everyone in the world remained perfect after Adam and Eve were created, and I were the only one who sinned against God, and lost my perfection, do you think the Father would have sent his Son just for me."

We once had a video in our church library called "The Son." It showed a father taking care of a train bridge that went across a river. The bridge would pivot in the middle of the river on a large pedestal. When the barges came up the river, he had to turn on the powerful motors that turned the gears to cause the bridge to swing open. If a train came he had to close the bridge so the train could pass over. The 10-minute video began with a father and his small son fishing along the river near the bridge. Suddenly the happy father's face turns to terror as he hears the whistle of the oncoming train. He rushes to the top of the bridge to throw the switch to engage the bridge. At the last minute he sees his little boy has come after him to help, but has fallen into the gears of the bridge. The father has a split second to make his decision. He pushed the button. The train passes over, the people even wave to the man on the bridge who has just lost his son. The most heart rending stories ever devised of human love can never compare to the love that we have in these four words, "God sent his Son."

2) We stand in awe of a Son who redeems us

Our heavenly Father sent his Son with one purpose in mind, to redeem the world from sin. "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." Jesus was born of a woman. The book of Job says, "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." Jesus is the Mighty God, El-Shaddai, the true God that appeared to Abraham. He is so true man born of a woman to experience our pain and sorrows in life. He never used his power as God to make life easier for himself, or to reduce the amount of pain and suffering he endured for our sin. When I experience pain in my life, whether it is a tooth ache, or head ache, or pains in my body from surgery, or hurting a bone or pulling a muscle, the pain is nothing compared to the pain Jesus endured to rescue me. That's a blessing I carry with me, whatever the future may bring.

Jesus was born under law to redeem those under law. That means a personal obligation to obey the law perfectly. He was tempted in all parts as we are yet without sin. He was able and willing to step in and love the heavenly Father with all his heart, soul, and mind. And also love his neighbor as himself. We could never meet these requirements of the law. Jesus met them for us. He even stepped in to make payment for times we failed to keep the law as Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." He removed the curse. He also put into your account and mine the perfect life he was able to live. (Hold up a minus sign and plus sign)

Think of yourself being in chains, yanked around, tortured, put into prison, and waiting for that day when you will receive your final sentence to be punished forever and ever. Jesus came to redeem you from the slavery of sin. He paid the ransom price in full. Satan cannot yank you around any more and torture you. Hebrews 2 says, "He shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Some years ago, kidnapers in Rome captured John Paul Getty, the 14 year old great grandson of the wealthy oil family. They demanded millions in ransom. When the family refused to pay, they cut off the boy's ear and sent it in to them in a box. Needless to say, it did not take long for the ransom to be paid. We were born slaves to sin and slaves to false hopes and dreams of rescuing ourselves. Satan loved to yank us around and torture us and make us miserable. As Martin Luther confessed, "Yea, deeper and deeper still I fell, Life had become a living hell. So firmly sin possessed me."

Jesus did more than free you from the slavery of sin. He gave you the position of having the full rights of sons. In Isaiah 43 the mighty God, the El Shaddai says, "I have redeemed, I have called you by name. You are mine." He adopted us, gave us full rights of sons. Through your faith in Christ you have an open account to all the blessings Christ has provided for you. You carry an ATM card that lets you withdraw as much help and strength you need for living a Christian life. You are like the lost son, waking up the next morning, with a ring on your finger, sandals on your feet, your dad's robe, and a glorious opportunity to serve the father who loved. As Zechariah sang after the birth of his son John, "To rescue us from the hands of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

3) We stand in awe of the Spirit who remind us who we are

It is easy for us to forget who we are. We get beat up by the problems of life, broken down by our failure to be the kind of people we want to be, discouraged by the way things are going in our world, caught up with trying to like the world around us. That's where our true God, the Holy Spirit blesses us by reminding us of who we are in Christ. "Because you are sons God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out 'Abba Father.'"

Just as the Father sent his Son to redeem us, the same loving Father also sends the Holy Spirit to remind us that we have been redeemed. Jesus said in John 14, "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth." Romans 8 says, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God...and by him we cry 'Abba Father.'" How many times will the Holy Spirit remind you that You are dear child of your heavenly Father? Once a day, a dozen times, hundreds of times? In the back of our minds, in the deepest recesses of our hearts, the Holy Spirit is always at work, reminding us of who we are. When you realize who you are in Jesus, a dear child of your heavenly Father, you will find yourself crying out and talking to God not as some nebulous force in the universe, but as your dear heavenly Father. The same Holy Spirit will also keep reminding you that you are an heir of better things to come, putting your feet on high ground.

What an amazing verse of Scripture this is from Galatians 4:4-7! The Mighty God, reveals himself to us as a Father who sent his Son, a Son who came to redeem us, and a Spirit that will not stop reminding us of who we are. That's the Triune God who will be with you in this New Year. Never say, "I sure am lucky" or even worse, "I can thank my lucky stars." Luck is not a word found in the vocabulary of people like you who know the love and mercy of the One true God. Every day of this New Year, you can wake up and be amazed by your everyday blessings in your Triune God. Amen.