

December 26, 2010
Christmas 1

"Perfectly Timed Blessings from Our 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.

It is amazing how our God brings blessings to us at just the right time. That certainly was true of the time our heavenly Father chose to send his Son into our world. "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son." It was no accident that Jesus was born in Bethlehem at the time that he was. This was carefully planned by our heavenly Father from all eternity. The blessings you enjoyed from your God this past year did not come to you by luck or chance. They were carefully planned for you by your heavenly Father, just as he planned the birth of his Son.

Have you ever noticed that some people just seem to be in the right time and right place to get a job, or start a business or meet the person they marry? The other day I saw a replay of a football game. It showed the quarterback throwing the football into the end zone. It went through the hands of his receiver, was tipped up by a defensive player, and then landed into the arms of another receiver who happened to be there to make the catch. He was in the right place and the right time to make the catch.

If you look back at this past year of your life, you can see the hand of the Lord providing blessings for you at just the right time. The timing of these blessings is always in the Lord's hands as the Psalmist David said, "My times are in your hands O Lord." The Lord once told his Old Testament people who were captives in Babylon for 70 years, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." God's perfectly timed plans are always the best plans. The Father sent his Son at the right time

When we look back at history we can see that the Lord chose the best time to send his Son to be born into our world. "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son." The Father who knew the best time to send the Savior into the world also knows the best time to bring blessings into your life. Psalm 104 tells us that our God gives his creatures their food at the right time. "These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up, when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things." Our Father knows when to send the rains to the earth as he did last week in such abundance. This causes the grass and plants to grow and produce seeds so the birds passing through our area have more than enough to eat. In Matthew 6 Jesus told us not to worry because the Lord our God who feeds the birds and cares for them will also care and provide for us at just the right time.

The heavenly Father who provided the right time for Jesus to come into the world also

chose the right moment for Jesus to go to the cross for us. In John 12 we hear Jesus telling his disciples, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." In John 17 Jesus prayed to his Father, "Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." God had the right moment for Jesus to take care of our problem of sin.

The Son redeemed us at the right time

Have you heard of the missile launches from Vandenberg where they try to intercept a missile launched from the Marshall Islands? Sometimes they are successful and other times they are not. What are the chances you can hit an arrow shot into the air with another arrow? Slim to none. What was Jesus' success rate at knocking down your problem of sin, sin that was threatening to destroy you eternally? It was a perfect hit, done at just the right time and in just the right way. "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Jesus was born of a woman. God's plan involved Jesus being born of a woman, a specific woman, Mary of Nazareth, who was engaged to be married to Joseph the carpenter. There was a precise moment when conception took place and the tiny baby inside of the mother's womb had our flesh, and our blood, and our DNA.

It also says that Jesus was born under the law. When he grew up as a child, he was under the law. He had to obey the Ten Commandments just as God expects us to obey the Ten Commandments. Jesus was tempted in all parts as we are, yet he was without sin. Even when he was a baby he was tempted to cry out in anger as babies do today. There was that moment in time when they were nailing him to the cross that he was able to pray, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus remained perfect every time temptations came his way.

We are under the law. We are required to obey the Ten Commandments, not just to the best of our ability, but perfectly. To illustrate what it means to be under the law, think of driving down the freeway and wanting to step on the accelerator, but always knowing the law is there telling you the speed limit is 65. Now think back to the time you took your driver's test under the watchful eye of the examiner who marked you down if you did not execute your turns or do your stops properly. How would you like such a person sitting next to you every time you drive, ready to mark you down and give you a ticket for even the slightest infraction? We are under God's law. Every time we fail to love people or love our God perfectly, we build up a huge debt of sin. We fall short of God's glory.

I read recently of certain people who have an autobiographical memory. They can remember almost every day and hour of their lives. One woman told of having a closet full of shoes and being able to remember where she bought each pair of shoes, and when she wore them, and what she did on the day that she wore them. I am glad I cannot remember all the things I have done in my life, especially the times I have failed my God, failed other people and failed myself. But God knows. Psalm 139 says that the Lord knows when I sit and when I stand. He knows everything about me. He has an autobiographical memory for every person who has ever lived on this earth. Time is certainly not our friend when we think of all the things we accumulate in one life time here on this earth.

But time is our friend, when we look at Jesus. It says that Jesus was born under the law to redeem those who were under the law. Remember when you fought with your brother or sister over Christmas vacation? Jesus did not do that. Remember when you were angry with your mom or dad? Jesus never did that. Remember when you had sinful thoughts about other people? Jesus never had such thoughts. His life on this earth was lived in real time. He kept God's law perfectly, and he did it just for you and just for me, so God our heavenly Father could accept and love us as his dear children. He did this to spare us from God's wrath against sin on judgment day. With Jesus our heavenly Father sees Jesus life instead of ours. He redeems us who are under the law by fulfilling the law for us. That means in God's eyes it looks as if we have never done anything wrong because we have the perfect life of Jesus in our place.

Jesus did this all for us in real time so we could be adopted as God's children in this life and for all eternity. Jesus once told the story of a son who ran away from his Father and spent his inheritance in wild living. He came home hoping the father would accept him as a hired servant. Instead the father opened his arms, kissed him and put a ring on his finger. He placed the best robe over his dirty clothes. What joy that son had the next morning when he woke up knowing he was fully accepted as a son. What joy awaits us in this coming year as we wake up every day to celebrate our privilege as God's children adopted by him through Jesus his Son!

A boy was being teased by some children at school because they found out he had been adopted. They said, "You were adopted." The boy responded. "You were born to your parents. When you were born to them, they were stuck with you. I was adopted. My parents picked me to be their child and they adopted me." There is nothing in you or me that moved God to adopt us into his family. He picked us from all eternity and adopted us through Jesus Son. Joyfully we can say that my God chose the right time for his Son to come into the world and chose choose the right time to redeem me so I could be adopted for this life and for all eternity.

The Holy Spirit comforts us at the right time

The Holy Spirit is there for us at different times in our lives to remind us we are God's dear children. Through our baptism we have God as our Father, Jesus as our Savior, and the Holy Spirit who will not let us forget who we are. "Because you are sons of God, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *Abba* Father. So you are no longer a slave but a son, and since you are a son, God has also made you an heir." The word "Abba" means dear father, or dad. Romans 8 says "The Spirit testifies with our Spirit that we are sons of God." 2010 was a great year because of all the times the Holy Spirit kept reminding you of who you are as dear child of your heavenly Father. 2011 will be a great year in your life and mine because of all the numerous times the Holy Spirit will keep bearing witness to who we are in Jesus.

Satan will do everything in his power to take us back into thinking we are slaves. He tries to talk us into thinking we need to do to earn God's love. I also have a sinful nature that constantly pulls me back into the default position that says, "You have to do something to make yourself worthy. God could never accept you as his child the way you are." Then the Holy Spirit leads us to call on our God with the words, "Abba Father" or "Dear Father." If somehow we could implant a device in you that would record how often the

Holy Spirit reminds you that you are a child of God, you would be astounded at how often this happening in your life.

At just the right time God sent his son for you. At just the right time Jesus redeemed you. At just the right time the Holy Spirit will comfort you. How blessed we were this past year. How blest we are in the New Year that waits for us. Amen.