

**Christmas 2**  
**January 3, 2016**

*“Another Year of Blessings from Our Triune God”*

**GALATIANS 4:4-7**

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

What will the new year bring? We cannot predict the future, but when you know the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit you know that you will receive one blessing after another. How true are the words of John 1:16 that tell us “From the fullness of his grace we have received one blessing after another.” When we gather for worship we do so in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We close our worship with the words, “The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord look on you with his favor and give you peace.” Our entire year will be spent receiving blessings from our true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I grew up in an environment where people often wished each other “good luck” whether playing in sports, or traveling, or taking a test in school, or even going into the hospital for surgery. Your life is not determined by fate or luck or chance. Your future is not determined by some giant roulette that spins around and around and where she stops nobody knows. Dear Christian you are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Your life rests in the hands of this true God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

As we look forward to another year of living under God’s grace we want to use these words just read to you from Galatians 4 to lead us in appreciating the blessings we have waiting for us from our Triune God.

**We have a Heavenly Father who sent us his Son**

You are so blessed, not lucky, but so richly blessed to know the love of your heavenly Father who has given you the gift of his Son. “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...” Our God gave us the gift of his Son at just the right time. Looking back at history we can see how the world at the time of Jesus’ birth was ideally suited for his coming into the world. The spread of the Greek language enabled people from different countries to communicate with each other. The Roman government brought peace into the world which enabled people to travel freely from one country to another. The Jewish people were crying out for the Messiah to come and deliver them. God’s perfect timing provided the perfect time for the Savior to be born.

God’s timing is always perfect. Ecclesiastes tell us, “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.” When Jesus was about to give his life on the cross for us, he told his disciples, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” And in John 17 Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.” Jesus’ birth and death and resurrection did not happen by chance or fate, it happened exactly at the right time as predetermined by our Father in heaven.

You have often heard it said, "Man proposes but God disposes." We can plan for events in our lives but we never know if we will be able to carry out these plans because the Lord will have other plans for us. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Will this be the year the Lord calls one of us home to be with him in glory? We live each day in this new year putting our lives into the hands of the Lord. The words "It is what it is" is not fatalistic thinking for the Christian. It is supreme trust and confidence in the true who works everything out for our good and his glory at just the right time.

Whatever problems or troubles this new year may bring, nothing will ever change the fact that our heavenly Father has sent his Son to us. He sent his Son to us to rescue us and save us when we were lost. When a soldier is captured on the field of battle, the leaders will send out other soldiers to rescue and save the soldier who was captured. I don't want to think about all the battles against sin that I will lose this coming year. I have no way of rescuing myself. That is why these simple words, "God sent his Son" are such a comfort for us. God sent his Son to take our sin upon himself and suffer for that sin so we could be saved. Whatever the new year brings, we can draw peace and comfort from knowing, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." And if our God freely gave us his Son will he not freely give us whatever is best for us? Romans 8 says, "He who did not spare his Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

### **We have God's Son who redeemed us**

Whatever this new year brings, we can live each day with the peace and confidence and hope that Jesus has redeemed us. "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." Yes, Jesus was born of a woman. He became one of us with our bones and our skin and our hair. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The book of Job says, "Man born of a woman is of a few days and full of trouble."

As I worked through these thoughts about Jesus being born of a woman, I was trying to get a sliver out of my finger. Jesus experienced pain in his body, the pain of a sliver on his finger, or the pain of blister on his foot, or certainly the pain that comes with being beaten by whips and then nailed to a cross. Jesus was not immune from being cold at night when he was traveling from place to place with his disciples. He got sick and he ran a fever just as you do when you are sick. The blood that flowed from his body is the blood a man born from a woman and also the blood of the very Son of God. This is a blessing we carry with us every minute and second of the new year in front of us.

God sent his Son to be born of a woman and to be born under the law to redeem those under the law. Jesus followed the laws of the Old Testament. He followed the laws laid down by the Roman government. He also kept the Ten Commandments perfectly. He did this to redeem or rescue people who were not able to keep the laws of God perfectly as God requires.

We are under the law. The year 2016 will be another year to experience the threats of God's law in our lives. We will experience those moments when we are crushed by our sins because God's law has a way of convicting us and telling us over and over again how far we fall short of God's glory. In his commentary on Galatians Martin Luther says this about feeling the threats of the law: "When I feel your terrors and threats, O Law, I immerse my conscience in the wounds, the blood, the death, the resurrection, and the victory of Christ. Beyond Him I do not want to see or hear anything at all."

So we live each day of this new year, not condemned by the law but freed or redeemed by Christ. Jesus was born under the law. He lived the perfect life we could never live. He died the perfect death with all our sins so we could be free from the law. So we live each day of this new year confidently saying with the Apostle Paul, "There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ."

What are the results of being freed from the condemnation of God's law? Now we have the full rights of sons. "That we might receive the full rights of sons." I can think of no better way to describe how blessed you are in Jesus than to recall the story Jesus told about the lost son. He ran away from home, lost all the money that had been given to him, and made a total mess of his life. Then he decided to return home to the father who loved him. How did the Father treat him? He welcomed him with open arms, gave him the best robe, put a ring on his finger and threw a feast for him. Think of that son waking up the next morning and realizing how he had been accepted by his father which he did not deserve. Through Jesus you are accepted and loved by your heavenly Father. You have the full right of sons. You carry this with you wherever you go and whatever this new year might bring to you.

### **We have the Holy Spirit who comforts us**

You are so blessed to know this true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You have a heavenly Father who sent his Son. You have the Son who redeemed you so you could be a dear child of your Father in heaven. And you have the Holy Spirit who comforts you by constantly reminding you how special it is to be a child of your heavenly Father. "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out 'Abba Father.'"

2015 was a great year for the people who are God's children through Jesus. Every day of this past year, hour by hour and minute by minute the Holy Spirit was active in your life reminding you that you are a dear child of God your Father. Romans 8 says, "The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are sons of God." 2016 will be another great year because of all those times the Holy Spirit keeps reminding you of who you are. The Holy Spirit leads us to cry out, "Abba Father" which is a term of endearment. So we are thankful for all the prayers we prayed that began with the words, "Dear Father or heavenly Father. We are thankful for all the times we were able to being the Lord's Prayer with the words, "Our Father who are in heaven."

Because we are sons of God through Jesus and not slaves we can look forward to the inheritance that is waiting for us in heaven. "So you are not longer a slave but a son; and since you are a son, God has also made you an heir." The Holy Spirit will keep reminding you that there is an inheritance waiting for you in heaven. How many times this past year have you been blessed by the Holy Spirit as you thought about the place God has prepared for you where he will wipe away all tears from your eyes?

So as we enter another year of life here on this earth we do not wish each other "Good luck" as some might do. No, we remind ourselves of the blessings we have in our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.