

# Gift of Hope

## Galatians 4:4-7

### Dr. Paul Cannings

#### A. The Hope (vs. 4):

1. And when fullness – A date was set by God (vs. 2) so that when everything was completely in place God's ordained plans were fully and timely executed.

a) From the historical point of view, the Roman Empire itself helped prepare the world for the birth of the Saviour. Roads connected city with city, and all cities ultimately with Rome. Roman laws protected the rights of citizens, and Roman soldiers guarded the peace. Thanks to both the Greek and Roman conquests, Latin and Greek were known across the empire. Christ's birth at Bethlehem was not an accident; it was an appointment: Jesus came in "the fullness of the time." (And, it is worth noting, that He will come again when the time is ready.)<sup>[1]</sup>

b) *First*, it was the moment which God had ordained for Messiah's coming. Daniel was given the date of His coming, 483 years after the edict of the Medo-Persian government to rebuild Jerusalem. *Second*, the Mosaic law had done its educational work, showing to the world that the most highly-favored nation on earth, the Jewish nation, was, despite all of God's blessings and mercy, totally depraved, giving the Gentile portion of the race a picture of its own totally depraved heart. *Third*, the Mosaic law in its three sections, the ten commandments, the laws governing social relationships, and the Levitical system of sacrifices, was done away with as a legal system, to be superseded by the gospel of grace centering faith in an historic Saviour. *Fourth*, the Roman empire maintained world peace. Roman roads made travel for missionaries easy. The universal use of the Greek language made the speedy

propagation of the gospel possible. The earth-stage was all set for the greatest event in the history of the human race, the incarnation, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of God the Son.<sup>[2]</sup>

2. Times came – This time was under God’s authority so that nothing or no one could interfere or interrupt what God set His mind to put in place.

a) The word *times*, (*chronos* (ΧΡΟΝΟΣ)), refers merely to time conceived of as a succession of moments. The other Greek word for *time*, *kairos* (ΚΑΙΡΟΣ), refers to the critical epoch-making periods foreordained by God. But the word Paul uses here refers merely to the lapse of time. The meaning is that when that moment came which completed the period of time designated by God that should elapse before the coming of the Son of God in incarnation, He would then send forth His Son.<sup>[3]</sup>

3. Come forth - God once and for all is the only person who determined when Christ would come to earth – Emmanuel (God with us).

a) The word translated “*sent forth*” demands study. It is *exapostello* (ἔξαποστελλο). The word *apostello* (ἀποστελλο) refers to the act of one who sends another with a commission to do something;; the person sent given credentials. Our word *apostle* comes from it. The prefixed preposition *apo* (ἀπο) means *from, of*. This means that the person sent is to represent the sender. He is his ambassador. Our Lord is called the Apostle and High Priest of our confession in Hebrews 3:1.<sup>[4]</sup>

4. Born of a woman – God led Paul to write this sentence very specifically to carefully delineate that this once in eternity birth was brought into existence by Him and it was unique because He created the entire process out of nothing. Jesus was begotten.

a) The exclusive reference to His mother harmonizes with the doctrine of the virgin birth as taught in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 1:18). Furthermore, Christ was born under

Law as a Jew. He kept the Law perfectly, fulfilled it (cf. Matt. 5:17), and finally paid its curse (cf. Gal. 3:13).<sup>[5]</sup>

b) “Born under the Law” – Christ came to fulfill the ceremonial law (Mt. 5:17) in order to abolish it, thus creating peace with God (Eph. 2:15-18).

5. Might redeem - The purpose of all of the above was to buy us back, like a person using every opportunity to purchase a slave off of the slave market. “... *you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

a) To be redeemed from existence “under law” is to be redeemed from “the curse of the law” (3:13). This redemption, according to 3:13f., was affected by Christ’s enduring the death of the cross on which a curse was pronounced; thus God’s sending his Son (v 4) is immediately associated with the death of his Son. Similarly in Rom. 8:3 God’s sending his Son’ ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ is immediately associated with the Son’s self-offering *περι ἁμαρτίας*, by which God ‘condemned sin in the flesh’.<sup>[6]</sup>

6. Receive – Those who know God, through His Son, have been bought from slavery of the flesh, influenced and controlled by Satan, He has set us aside to obtain the possession of the Holy Spirit. “*You were brought at a price; do not become slaves to men.*” (1 Corinthians 7:23; Romans 6:6-7, 12-14).

a) This implies the *suitableness* of the reward.. “Receive as something *due*” (as predestined, or laid up for us by God) (Luke 16:25; 23:41; Col. 3:24; 2 John 8).<sup>[7]</sup>

7. Adoption as sons – God did not redeem us just so we go to heaven. He redeems us so that we can experience all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of His kingdom; “...behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst’ (Luke 17:21)

a) *Full rights of sons* – Lit. “adoption (of a son).” See Ro. 8:15, where the “Spirit of sonship” is contrasted with “spirit of slavery” (Eph. 1:5). God takes into his family as fully recognized sons and heirs both Jews (those who had been under law) and Gentiles who believe in Christ.

b) The Roman process of adoption required the presence of seven witnesses. Their testimony was crucial if, after the adoptive father’s death, his “natural” heirs contested the validity of the adoption: the witnesses had to testify that a valid adoption had taken place in their presence. We may compare the twofold testimony confirming the divine adoption of believers in Rom. 8:15f.<sup>[8]</sup>

8. Adoption as sons – When Christ redeemed us from sin His focus was to provide us abundant life (John 10:10), a relationship that grows to become a friendship (John 15:12), and a relationship that transforms us into His very nature (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:1-4; 2 Peter 1:3-4). Paul in Ephesians 3:14-19 says we are His family that grows up to experience His fullness.

a) Sonship provided us the GREATEST opportunity ever and that is to have a very intimate relationship with Christ because of the deposit of the Holy Spirit. This made us into the very nature of Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:15; 2 Pet. 1:2-4) to the point we can functionally demonstrate the very character of Christ (Gal. 2:20).

9. Adoption as sons – God’s focus is to re-establish His family to its original state (2 Corinthians 3:18) where we function as His children (Romans 8:14-17), just like it was in the Garden of Eden. This is modeled in the Book of Hosea.

## B. The Gift (vs. 6):

1. You are sons – Because Paul is writing to believers, he said they are already in God's family as sons and will always be this way.
  - a) Sonship rules out servanthood and includes heirship. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of these future blessings ( Cf. Eph 1:13, 14).<sup>[9]</sup>
  - b) In the first century, adoption meant that all old debts were canceled and the adoptee started a new life as part of a new family (cf. note on Rom. 8:15).<sup>[10]</sup>
  - c) "God bestows on us not only the status of sons [through the sending of his Son] but also the character and knowledge of sons [through the sending of the Spirit]. He bestows on us the character and knowledge of sons because we are already in the status of sons". H. D. Betz (*Galatians*, 209f.)<sup>[11]</sup>
2. Come forth - God once and for all is the only person who determined not just Christ coming to be with us but also the Holy Spirit permanently, completely possessing us (John 14:16-17; Ephesians 1:3-4; Titus 3:4-7). This is who works in us to make us a brand new creation (Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:12-13).
3. Holy Spirit – God is a Spirit being so in order for us to have His same nature, so that we can be His children, sons and friends, the Holy Spirit came into us at the point of salvation (Titus 3:4-8), making us a brand new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) because Christ is "the firstborn of all creation."
  - a) God the Father not only "sent His Son; He also sent the Spirit. Thus the full Trinity is involved in the work of salvation. The Holy Spirit is a gift of God to every believer because of sonship. No sons or daughters lack the Spirit. Furthermore, He is present within each believer's heart to give evidence of the one's position in God's family. The Spirit moves the believer to pray to God, addressing Him as Abba, Father

(cf. Rom. 8:15). The word “Abba” is the Aramaic word for “Father.” It is the diminutive form used by small children in addressing their fathers. It is appropriate to see its’ similarity to the English word “Daddy.” Used by Christ (cf. Mark 14:36), this familiar form indicates intimacy and trust as opposed to the formalism of legalism.<sup>[12]</sup>

4. Heart - The transformation process takes place in our hearts which is viewed in the scriptures as the innermost being of a person. When this transformation has taken place the entire person is impacted; their minds, their emotions and their spiritual well-being. This is why as a new creation we become God’s children, sons and friends (Ephesians 3:14-19).

5. Cry out ‘Abba! Father!’ – The transformation process creates a very intimate relationship with the Lord. This allows us to boldly come before the Lord as our Daddy, as boisterous or as loudly as we would like (Romans 8:26).

a) ‘When we cry “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God’ (Rom. 8:15f.).<sup>[13]</sup>

6. Father – Even though Paul says ‘Abba’ he also says “Father”. The purpose is to remind us that God is the author of our spiritual growth. He “so loved the world” (John 3:16); He sent Christ; He orchestrated the time and He is a part of the Trinity at the resurrection, so He deserves our full respect.

a) The term “Father” (4:6) suggests both intimacy and reverence.<sup>[14]</sup>

b) The bestowal of the Holy Spirit gave the Galatians a consciousness of the filial relationship between themselves as sons of God and God their Father. Instead of looking upon God as a Judge, they could now look upon Him as their Father with whom they have the privilege of living as His sons. The fact of their possession of the indwelling Spirit was enough to demonstrate to the Galatians that they were no longer under law, but under grace.<sup>[15]</sup>

7. You are no longer slaves – We are no longer under the ownership of Satan where he could have abused us anytime he chose. This is because we have been redeemed.

8. But a son – The main purpose for which Christ died is to remove us from being under ownership to Satan. He did this by transforming us into the very nature of God in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are a brand new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) because Christ is “the firstborn of a new creation” (Colossians 1:15).

a) Thus, the Galatians are reminded that it is not through coming under law, but in maintaining their freedom from it that they will be able to obtain the blessing of Abraham, which is the blessing the Judaizers held before their eyes as a prize, obtainable only through circumcision. Paul appeals to them to retain the status of adult sons under grace which they already possessed, rather than go back to the position of a minor and a slave under law.<sup>[16]</sup>

9. An heir - We are not only sons, but God’s purpose is to also make us have complete access to inheriting all He has in store for us because Christ is possessor and heir of all things (Matthew 21:38; Hebrews 1:2) and we are made to be in Him at the point of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10; Colossians 3:1-4).

10. Through God – God being supreme, Creator of all things, almighty and sovereign is the creator of our salvation plan.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 706). Victor Books.

<sup>[2]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 3, pp. 114–115). Eerdmans.

<sup>[3]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 3, p. 114). Eerdmans.

- <sup>[4]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 115). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[5]</sup> Campbell, D. K. (1985). [\*Galatians\*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 601). Victor Books.
- <sup>[6]</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1982). [\*The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text\*](#) (p. 196). W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.
- <sup>[7]</sup> Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., & Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [\*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation: Vol. VI\*](#) (p. 386). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.
- <sup>[8]</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1982). [\*The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text\*](#) (pp. 197–198). W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.
- <sup>[9]</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). [\*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament\*](#) (Ga 4:6). Moody Press.
- <sup>[10]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [\*Tyndale concise Bible commentary\*](#) (p. 584). Tyndale House Publishers.
- <sup>[11]</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1982). [\*The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text\*](#) (p. 198). W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.
- <sup>[12]</sup> Campbell, D. K. (1985). [\*Galatians\*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 601). Victor Books.
- <sup>[13]</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1982). [\*The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text\*](#) (pp. 198–199). W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.
- <sup>[14]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [\*Tyndale concise Bible commentary\*](#) (pp. 583–584). Tyndale House Publishers.
- <sup>[15]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 116). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[16]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 117–118). Eerdmans.