

Galatians 4:4-7 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to shout, “Abba, Father!” ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are also an heir of God through Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Christmas is over. The parties, the presents, the wrappings and trappings of Christmas are behind us and we’ve turned our sights towards the end of the old year and the start of the new.

Likely though you haven’t turned completely from Christmas. That new toy you got, that present you were waiting for or that surprised you probably still holds your interest, at least a little, reminding you that Christmas was only 5 days ago. But no doubt it will, eventually, wear off. That piece of Christmas you play with or hold in your hands or look at on the shelf or on the kitchen counter will fade. But there is a *peace* of Christmas you *can* take with you into the new year, a peace that lasts all year, all your life. Not a piece that you hold in your hands or look at on a shelf, but peace to hold in your heart.

What peace is that? Peace with *God*! Peace with your creator. Yes, peace with the one who says, “**Be perfect as I am perfect!**” Who says, “**The wages of sin is death!**” And, “**The sinful mind is hostile to God!**”

Such peace sounds impossible. And on our own, it is. Without Christmas we have nothing. We’re slaves — to the sin we are and the sins we commit, to the death waiting for us, to the hell we deserve. There is no peace. And so many don’t even know it. They have no idea what is hanging over their heads, that their sins, guilt, and shame should be causing them unbearable angst, and worry, and despair. Others do, and spend their lives trying to cover up their fear and dread, to just not think about it.

That’s the way it is without Christmas — the world is dark and devoid, ugly and painful. Heaven is impossible, peace, true peace, is nonexistent. We are helpless and without hope.

Because Christmas brings with it more than just a sentimental peace, or hope, or comfort. Those hollow sentiments the world likes to sell at Christmas fade as quickly as the calendar flips from 25 to 26, as lights

come down, trees are put away, and diets are adhered to more closely. That time of year, that peace, that hope, that comfort, it’s done. It’s over. No it’s not! Right here before us today, St. Paul has a peace of Christmas for you to take with you every single day. It’s the peace that comes from and through God’s Son, Jesus.

Peace with God was shattered the moment Adam and Eve fell into sin. No one has been perfect since — only sinful all the time. So **God sent his Son, to be born of a woman so that he would be born under God’s law** too, just like us. Jesus was the first human since Adam and Eve were created to be born perfect, without sin. Paul lays out God’s purpose in sending his Son to earth to live under his law — **To redeem those under his law.** To redeem us!

That had been God’s plan from the beginning — send a Savior to be a Substitute — not only in living a perfect life under God’s law, but to die, enduring the punishment for every law we’ve broken. It’s who Isaiah wrote about 700 years before Jesus’ birth — ***He was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.***

By his wounds we are healed, as well as our relationship with God. With God’s plan of salvation initiated at Christ’s birth at Christmas and finished on the cross on Good Friday and the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, it’s all erased, everything is right again. In Christ our substitute, our Savior, we are perfect as he is perfect. The wages of our sin has already been dolled out, paid, and finished by Jesus. And our minds, once hostile to God, now through the gospel of our Savior’s birth at Christmas, his death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead, having seen God’s great love for us we long to see it, receive it, and proclaim it every day.

This is where we find our peace this time of year — the true peace of Christmas. Not in the gifts, the lights, the decorations, the traditions, but in Jesus, our Savior, our substitute. As all the other pieces of Christmas come down, be sure to take with you in your hearts, always, this peace of Christmas.

We’re no longer slaves, but sons. Slaves have no peace. They are called into service, forced into labor, beaten into submission, at any time. There is no peace. That’s what we were, slaves to the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. But no more! Christmas changes all that! Through God’s Son, we’ve all been made sons — **We are all sons of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** Through baptism you were joined to him — to his

perfect life, his death for your sins, and his resurrection to new life, not as a slave, but a son.

That sets up another distinction between slaves and sons. Slaves are confident of just one thing — more work. Servitude to their master. Many try this route to get through this life and into heaven. They think that they can earn God's love, putting forth their own efforts as the reason for God's blessings and salvation. Something I can take part in, I can have, I can hold, I can see, I can be confident in — and we long to be confident. But as sinners, on our own, how can we ever be confident in what we do? Even my best work is tainted with sinful motives and expectations. Even my best works for others, deep down there's a part of me that's only doing it for me. And if this is how we are confident of God's love and salvation, how can I ever be confident that I've done enough? Confidence in our future here on earth and in our home in heaven rooted in what I do or how I do it is at best a shaky confidence, really no confidence at all. With a small push from the devil, the world, our sinful flesh, it all comes crashing down. Slaves are confident of one thing — there's always more that has to be done!

In Paul's picture, sons are confident in their future because they are heirs. Everything their father has, they will have too. They are always set, safe, and secure. That's how the heir relationship Paul describes worked in his day — a son got the inheritance simply by virtue of being a son. An inheritance is not something you work for. It is simply received.

The Gospel never revolves around us doing something for God or us doing anything at all. The gospel revolves around — is rooted in — God doing everything for us, God coming to us and serving us. Us receiving from God, through faith in his Son, grace and every blessing.

Because of Jesus, his life lived perfectly under God's law for us, his death died on the cross in our place, we have all been adopted as sons, heirs together with Jesus of all that he won for us in his victory over death and hell. Have you been baptized? There at that font, through water and the Word you were adopted as God's heir. Into your heart he sent his Spirit, implanting in you his gift of faith in Jesus as your Savior. In Christ *you* are no longer a slave. *You* are no longer hostile to God. The wages of *your* sin has been paid, *you* are perfect in his sight.

Be confident. Paul sums that confidence up with the words, **Abba, Father.** Those are not words of a slave, a stranger, or even a close friend. Who else calls their father “daddy?” Who else calls their God, “Father?” They are the words of a dearly loved son who knows the love his father

has for him. **When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son.** How dearly he must love *you*!

Be confident as you begin a new year this week. Are your resolutions set? Here's the only one you truly need: Resolve to carry the peace of Christmas with you throughout the year. To remember often what it took to rid you of your sin, to free you from death, to rescue you from the fires of hell. God became man! Lived, suffered, and died for you. That's how much God loves you. That's how much your Father treasures you. No matter what the new year holds, ups or downs, unforeseen twists, turns, or tragedies, that truth will see you through it all.

And be confident beyond 2020. Your eternity is set, safe, and secure in Christ Jesus your Savior, your substitute, your fellow heir of everlasting life. Confidently keep your eyes on that prize, your eyes to the skies, from where your Savior will return, not as a lowly baby in a stable, but the King of kings and Lord of lords descending in power and might to make all things right, when the time fully comes again. Until that day, carry with you the peace from Christmas, confident of your inheritance in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!