

“The Perfect Christmas”

Galatians 4:4-7

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Christmas Eve, 2008

Think with me about “*The Perfect Christmas*.” I’m sure all of us have some pictures, thoughts and feelings about *The Perfect Christmas*. Some are real, while others are ideal; some are past, others present. There’s the perfect Christmas tree, the perfect song, the perfect family gathering (made impossible for many this year with all the snow and cancelled flights), the perfect cookies and candy, dinner, and, we can’t leave out, the perfect Christmas *present!*

If you haven’t been able to put *The Perfect Christmas* together, there are people ready and willing to help. Just buy their books. Books with titles such as ...

- *How To Have A Perfect Christmas*.
- Or, *The Absolutely Without A Doubt Most Fantastically Perfect Christmas Ever*.
- Then, for the organized and a bit compulsive, there’s *Checklist For A Perfect Christmas*.
- And, how could we fail to mention, *Martha Stewart’s Christmas*.

Our thoughts tonight do not come from any of those books, helpful as they may be, but from one which is guaranteed to be right about “*The Perfect Christmas*,” and everything else, from the Bible. It tells us about the original Christmas, which was and still is real, not just ideal; which was and is available for everyone to experience; which was and still is *Perfect*. Our view of the original Christmas tonight is from the brief verses in the first part of the earlier Scripture reading, Galatians chapter 4.

These verses tell us that *the timing of Christmas was perfect*. Paul writes,

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.”

Why was Jesus not born earlier, or later? Paul tells us that God the Father sent God the Son, Jesus Christ, to us at the exact time He had chosen. Christ’s coming into the world was not an afterthought, nor was the timing ever open to any debate or change. God chose this time before He created time and space, and when the exact time came, He sent Christ to us, born as one of us, truly God and truly man.

Down through the centuries many have noted the historical confirmations that indeed Christ came at exactly the right time.

- The period known as the Pax Romana, the *peace of Rome*, was in its early stages. This was the period from roughly 27 B.C. to 180 A.D., a time characterized by relative peace and prosperity in the Roman empire. Those conditions helped the gospel spread throughout the empire.

- Also, Greek was the common language throughout the empire, which made communication easier for the government, businesses, and for the gospel.
- Added to that was the much improved and far flung system of roads for travel which Paul, and thousands of other believers, used in spreading the gospel from the first days of the church onward.
- More and more people living in cities also helped with spreading the good news of Jesus.

All of this evidence, and more, is not a random coincidence. It is confirmation of God's sovereignty and wisdom in sending Christ at precisely the right time. The time He had chosen. The time for which He prepared the world. God's timing, the timing of the first Christmas, was *perfect*.

Secondly, these verses tell us that *the gift of Christmas was perfect*. Many people have searched long and hard for the *perfect gift* for others this year. Sometimes it's easy, at other times it's impossible.

A woman who always enjoys giving special presents to her family and friends heard, in a roundabout way of course, that some of her grandchildren weren't all that excited about their presents from her on the last Christmas. She was surprised and a bit disappointed, but decided that now she would get each of them the perfect gift. She thought long and hard about it, but was stumped.

Finally, she thought of the perfect gift. She would buy a nice card, one individually chosen for each grandchild, and enclose a check. She bought the cards, writing "Buy your own present" in large letters in each one, and carefully wrote out the generous checks, and then mailed the cards, feeling both relieved and proud of herself.

A few days after Christmas she went to her desk to do some work. When she opened the drawer, right there staring her in the face, were the checks! Each of the grandchildren had received her card with "Buy your own present!" written in large letters, but *without* the check!

Yes, sometimes our perfect plans and gifts turn out to be anything but perfect. Not so with God's Christmas gift to us!

We could take the easy route here and simply say that since God's gift is God the Son who is, of course, perfect, that His gift to us is perfect. But in these few words Paul gives us two of the many aspects of perfection in God's gift of Jesus. Verse 4, again, says,

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law."

First, Jesus Christ was "born of a woman." This is not exactly a startling new revelation to us, but it is a vital truth. Christ's mission was to do what we cannot do — to pay the penalty for our sin in full so we can be forgiven of our sins and be made acceptable to holy

God through Him. To do that the gift, the Savior, had to be truly God without sin, and yet truly one of us. And so we have the great truth, the great miracle and mystery of the virgin birth. Jesus, truly God, truly man. God's *perfect provision* for our sin.

Secondly, Jesus Christ was "born under the Law." Although God, He lived under the Law God had given to Israel. He was circumcised when He was eight days old. He was presented in the temple when he was forty days old. He began the required pilgrimages to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old.

He followed, obeyed the Mosaic Law with all of its regulations and demands perfectly and, with His death and resurrection, fulfilled it completely. He delighted to do God the Father's will even through rejection and ridicule, death on a cross and becoming a curse for us (*cf.* Psalm 40:8; John 4:34; Galatians 3:13).

To be our Savior Jesus Christ had to live perfectly under and fulfill the Law, and He did. *The Gift of Christmas was Perfect.*

Finally, *the effects of Christmas are perfect.* Let's note three effects of receiving God's perfect Christmas gift. First, when we receive God's gift we are redeemed and so are adopted as God's children. Verse 5,

"so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

Since we are sinful, we cannot offer anything to God to atone for our sin, to redeem us out of sin's deadly control. But because Jesus fulfilled the Law, took all our sins upon Himself, paid for them in full, He can rescue us from the curse of the law (*cf.* 3:13).

As a result, every believer is no longer separated from and an enemy of God, but is His cherished child. As the apostle John wrote,

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God..." (1 John 3:1-2a)

As C.S. Lewis wrote, "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God."

Secondly, as God's sons, as His children, we have a close relationship with Him. Verse 6,

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"

The term *Abba* is an Aramaic word which may have come from some of the first words of infants. But its use was not limited to little children saying, in effect, "Daddy." It is found in use by adult children stating their ties to their father. As one writer states, the word "is not so much associated with infancy as it is with intimacy." (George: 307)

Receiving Jesus Christ, the *Perfect Gift of Christmas*, brings you into a close, intimate relationship with the eternal, sovereign God.

And then, receiving God's perfect Christmas gift also makes you an heir of God. Yes, an heir of God. Verse 7,

“Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”

Jesus said that those who know and follow Him will “will inherit eternal life.” (Matthew 19:29). God gives His perfect, everlasting life to those who are His heirs through Jesus. As well the Bible tells us we are heirs of God's kingdom, promises, righteousness, salvation; we are heirs of all things!

“*The Perfect Christmas.*” It's not found in the beautiful decorations, wonderful gifts, special times with family and friends. It is found in Jesus. God wants everyone here tonight to have His gift of Jesus, and what Jesus brings: complete and forever forgiveness of all your sins, a close and growing relationship with Him now and forever.

You can't earn it, it is His *gift*. The church, its services and ceremonies cannot give it to you. It is wrapped up in Jesus, only in Him. As Jesus said,

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

You can receive Jesus now by telling Him you realize He is God's gift who died for you, that you are placing your faith in Him and want Him to forgive your sins and give you life with Him forever. If you do that or want to talk about it, speak to me, Pastor Tyler or someone here before you go home this evening.

For all of us who have received Jesus Christ, God's perfect gift, who have our sins forgiven and a relationship with God, thank Him! Celebrate Jesus' birth!

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