

# Communion

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Date: 15 September 2019

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son. But why? Why did the Father give His only Son? Why did the Father send His Son to die on the cross, that death that we will remember and celebrate this morning at the Lord's table? Why? Well, we find the answer to that question in the passage that we read in Galatians, and we're going to read again verse 4 of chapter 4 of Galatians. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. And the passage continues.

Why did He send His Son? Well, to redeem His people, that He would be a ransom for His people, the words that we sung and the words that Jesus employed to speak of His own mission. The Son of man came to give His life as a ransom, the redemption price as a ransom for many. The Father sent His Son to redeem His people. He gave His Son as a ransom for many. And in the verse, Paul deals with God's work of redemption. And I want to notice some of the elements of that that we find in this verse. This verse tells us about the when of redemption, God's time. It also tells us the who, or deals with the who of redemption in two senses, who is the Redeemer, but also who are the redeemed. It also tells us about the how of redemption. The very word to redeem encapsulates the answer to the question, how? How is it that God secures this redemption of His people? But it also touches on the why of redemption? He came to redeem those under the law that we might receive adoption. There's a purpose statement there answering that question, why? Why did He do this? With what end in mind or in view? And those are the different aspects that we want to just think briefly about this morning. The when, the who, the how, and the why of our redemption. And so, let's think about each in turn. First of all, the when, or God's time of redemption. Well, the language of time is very prominent in the verse, but when the set time had fully come. When the set time had come, I think those of us who are maybe familiar with other versions of the Bible, we just think of when the time had come. I think the idea of the set time is just to capture the meaning of that word, the appointed time. When the appointed time had come, when did God execute

His plan of redemption? When did He purchase our salvation? When the time had fully come, when the set time had arrived, or when the fullness of time had come. What does this tell us about God and the time of His redemptive initiative? Well, fundamentally, it tells us of a God who is over time and who governs time. Time is His time. He did not, He does not, and cannot ever act under constraint. Time is never God's enemies. We sometimes speak of time as our enemy, and perhaps there's a sense in which that can be true. It's never true for God. Time is never God's enemy. He knows nothing of the pressure of time.

He acts in His time. When the set time had fully come, not a moment before, not a moment after, but only when the time had come. The time to execute this plan of redemption. But when we think of this language that is employed here by Paul of when the time had fully come, I think we can also draw in other truths with regard to this appointed time, vis-a-vis the work of redemption. This time was the time determined by God in eternity. In eternity, before the creation of the universe, the triune God conceived His plan of redemption. And in eternity, the time was set. Before time even existed, the time was set. The red-letter day of redemption was marked in the divine calendar. So, in that sense, it's when the time had fully come. But it's also, of course, the time for the fulfillment of God's promises and prophecies and purposes. From the time of man's fall in the Garden of Eden, God graciously promised a coming Redeemer, the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

And through the prophets, as we meander our way through the prophets, we see how God foretold that the coming of Messiah time and time again. By the giving of the law, God provided a schoolmaster that would, in due time, lead those under the law, to use the language of the verse, to the one who alone would fulfill the law for us. In that sense, it was when the time had fully come, when the time for the fulfillment of prophecy. This was a time prepared by God, not only for the coming of His Redeemer, but also for the proclamation of the good news concerning the Redeemer. In this regard also, it was all planned perfectly in terms of the fitting time. With regard to the suitability of the time for the extension of the church, let me just read from John Stott's commentary on Galatians with regard to this aspect of the time being fitting. And he expresses himself in this way, it was the time when

[ 6 : 36 ] Rome had conquered and subdued the known inhabited earth, when Roman roads had been built to facilitate travel and Roman legions had been stationed to guard them. It was also the time when the Greek language and culture had given a certain cohesion to society. At the same time, the old mythological gods of Greece and Rome were losing their hold on the common people, so that the hearts and minds of men everywhere were hungry for a religion that was real and satisfying. It was the time set by God, the fitting time, the appropriate time. God's time had come. That's something then about the when of redemption, but let's also speak about the who of redemption. Really, when we speak about the who of redemption, there are two aspects to this. There is the identity of the Redeemer, and there is the identity of the redeemed, and we'll think of both. First of all, the identity of the Redeemer, what we're told in the verse, but when the time had fully come, God sent His Son.

So very clearly, the identity of the Redeemer is there identified. God sent His Son. If God's time speaks of the when of redemption, God's Son speaks of the who of redemption. Who redeems? Who is the Redeemer? Now, these verses make very clear that redemption is the work of the triune God. God the Father sends God the Son. God the Son, driven by loyalty to the Father and love for the lost, for you and me, willingly takes on the redeeming work commended to Him. And as we'll see, and as we've read in these verses, redemption involves a second sending, the sending of God the Spirit, that we who are redeemed might be able to cry out to God, Abba, Father. So, God the Father is involved, and God the Son is involved, and God the Spirit is involved in this glorious, redemptive work. But this morning, we want to focus particularly on God's Son as the one entrusted with executing God's work of redemption.

What can we say of the one sent? Well, what does Paul say about Him? Well, we turn to the verse again. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

So, really, three things are said there about Jesus. First of all, He is identified as God's Son. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. In the words of John, God's one and only Son, His Son in a unique and exclusive way. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is truly and eternally divine. God sent His Son.

But then we're also told about the one who came, that He was born of a woman. Now, what does that tell us about Jesus? The Son of God, but born of a woman. Words that imply no more and no less than that Jesus had a true human mother. He was, He became a man, a real man. Truly, and from the moment of His conception, human, human and indeed eternally human. He remains human. One of us at the right hand of the Father, even now, or as it's been memorably declared by one, the dust of the earth on the throne of heaven.

[10:19] A man. He became a man. Born of a woman speaks of that reality. But we're also told that the one sent by the Father was born under law. Now, maybe that's not so clear as to what it means or what it implies. What does this mean? Well, though He was the author of the law, He willingly placed Himself under law, subject to its demands and charged with perfectly fulfilling its righteousness. He became, in a sense, a slave to the law. So, we see in these few words the manner in which Jesus was so uniquely qualified to be the redeemer of humankind. So uniquely qualified to reconcile men and women to God. You and me, sinners such as we are. To stand in the breach between God and humankind. Who better than one who was fully God and fully man? To stand in the middle, in the breach between those who were far apart. Those who were alienated and far from one another. Jesus was and is fully divine and fully human. And He is the one who both submitted to God's law and succeeded in rendering perfect obedience to God's law. Not only that we would look on and admire such perfect obedience, but that we would acknowledge and recognize that He lived that life of perfect obedience for us in our place. He lived the life that we were incapable and are incapable of living. So, He died for us. Yes, indeed, we think of that especially this morning, but He also lived for us. The who of redemption in regard to who the redeemer is. But of course, the who of redemption also requires us to identify those who are redeemed.

The identity of those redeemed. And that too is spoken of by Paul in this verse. Let's read it again. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law. To redeem those under the law. And so, again, there we have identified those who are to be redeemed. The beneficiaries, if you wish, of this redemption, of this ransom that was to be paid. Who are they? Well, they are described as those under the law. What can we say about that? Well, Paul is using, I suppose you could call it, theological shorthand. And under the umbrella of this statement, we can identify at least three significant truths. The statement that Jesus came to redeem those under the law.

First of all, it's implicit in what He says that we are all subject to God's law. And now, this was very true, perhaps particularly true for the Jews who were under obligation as recipients of the law.

But the absence of the article there in the verse is probably deliberate to extend the obligation to all. All are under or subject to God's law. All of us. All of us gathered here today, all men and women, subject to God's law, under law in that sense. But of course, it's also true. And again, this isn't explicitly stated, but it's implicit and very evident. We only need to look around and look in ourselves without even turning to the Bible, though obviously the Bible confirms this, that all are lawbreakers. We're subject to the law. We're under the law, but we fail. We break the law. And as I say, Paul doesn't explicitly make that point in this verse, but he does so very eloquently and repeatedly elsewhere. That is our reality. We are lawbreakers. And as lawbreakers, we are under the curse of the law.

In that sense, we're under the law, under its curse. The accusing finger of the law rightly rests upon us because we have broken the law. And as lawbreakers, the law both enslaves us and accuses us. And there's nothing that we can do about it. No way in which we can sort out this reality, this problem that is ours. Jesus was sent to redeem those under the law. He was sent to redeem the likes of you and me, those who are under law, but who have broken the law and who are under the curse of the law.

[ 15 : 12 ] And so there in the verse, we have the who of redemption in these two regards, the identity of the Redeemer, God's Son, and the identity of the Redeemed, those who are under law. But also, we have touched on what we might call the how of redemption. We've noticed the when, we've noticed the who in its two senses, but we also have the how of redemption. How does God, through His Son, redeem His people? Now again, Paul in this verse does not explain the how. Indeed, in the verses that we've read, there's not an explanation of how that works, of what it was that Jesus did in order to secure our redemption. But just a very brief consideration of the word redeemed allows us to comment on the how of redemption. The very word encapsulates something of the how of redemption.

To redeem, the verb that Paul uses here was a word that he borrowed from a common usage in the Greek world. And it is language that's borrowed from the marketplace, and very particularly from the slave market. And at the slave market, if somebody was of a mind to buy the freedom of a slave, then they could do so. They could redeem that slave. And by paying a price, the slave could be redeemed and be granted his freedom. And that was something that people could do. And this is the language that would be employed to describe such a transaction. And that in itself gives us an insight into the how of redemption, of how God bought our freedom. Now, we know who is being bought. We've already identified who are being bought, those under law. We know who is doing the buying. It's the Son who who redeems. But how does He do so? What is the price that He pays? What is the price that Jesus paid to secure, to buy our redemption? Well, Jesus answers that question for us. And that's the reason why we read the passage in Mark. In Mark chapter 10 and verse 45, listen again to what Jesus says concerning

His own mission. The price to be paid to secure our liberty, our freedom, was the price of Jesus' own life. He gave His life as a ransom for many. At heart, this points to the giving of His own righteous, lawful filling life over to death in our place. His life, His shed blood, His death is the price paid to redeem the lost, the enslaved. No higher price could have been paid, and no lesser price would have sufficed to secure your redemption. Now, we can't, we mustn't consider the price paid by Jesus in some kind of detached, theological, academic manner. Martin Luther, the great reformer, certainly didn't view it in those terms. And listen to what he says as he ponders on a price so high paid to secure his redemption and the redemption of all sinners. And listen to the words of Martin Luther. Let me just read what he says, O law, you have no power over me, and therefore you accuse and condemn me in vain.

For I believe Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father sent into the world to redeem us miserable sinners, oppressed under the tyranny of the law. He gave His life and shed His blood for me.

Therefore, feeling your terrors and threatening, O law, I plunge my conscience in the wounds, the blood, the death, the resurrection, and victory of Christ. Besides Him, I will see nothing.

[ 19 : 32 ] I will hear nothing. And so, in very passionate and vivid language, Luther speaks of this great reality, but from his own personal experience of enjoying that security and that liberty and that confidence that comes from embracing what God has done for us through Jesus, celebrating the price that He paid awful though the scene is, nonetheless, grateful, celebrating what it secured.

So, those under law are redeemed or freed by means of the price paid by Jesus. But freed from what? Well, when we explore through the New Testament, we are able to discover different ways or different aspects of that freedom. We're freed from the curse of the law that we've already commented on. Indeed, in this same letter to the Galatians in the previous chapter, in verse 13 of chapter 3, we read, Christ redeemed us. Again, that same language. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. And Paul continues, freed from the curse of the law, freed from the guilt of sin. Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians that immediately follows on the letter to the Galatians, at least in the order of the letters in our Bibles, again, employs that language of redemption and that connection. In Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 7, we read, in Him, in Jesus, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace, freed from the guilt of sin and freed from an empty way of life. In Peter's first letter, he again uses the language of redemption and speaks of how God's people have been redeemed from that empty way of life by Jesus and by the ransom price that He paid.

But there is one other matter that I want to touch on. We thought about the when of redemption, when the set time had fully come. We thought a little bit about the who of redemption, the identity of the Redeemer, God's Son, born of a woman, born under law. We thought something about the identity of the redeemed, those who were under the law. And we thought very briefly and fleetingly about the how of redemption and what was required, what was done, and how the very Word points to what Jesus did in giving His own life as a ransom for many. But then finally, there's the why of redemption. And the verse also touches on that. There is a purpose statement in the verse.

There in Galatians 4, we return to Galatians 4 and verse 4. We'll read the whole verse again. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem, that He might redeem. There's the purpose statement in the verse, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship, that we might receive adoption to sonship, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Our redemption is for this purpose, that we might receive adoption to sonship, that we might become God's sons, to put it very clearly. That's the purpose, the why of redemption. Paul identifies God's central purpose for His redeemed people. In answer to the question, why did God redeem His people? So that we might receive the full rights of sons, to use the language of another translation, that we might receive the full rights of sons. God's redemption is rich beyond measure. We're not just freed from slavery to and the curse of the law. We are freed for adoption, for belonging in God's family. The Son became a slave that slaves might become sons, to use the language that others have memorably employed. The Son became a slave that slaves might become sons. The manner we become sons is by the redemption price paid by Jesus. But the manner in which we are made to appreciate and experience our sonship is by the sending of the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, which is what Paul goes on to talk about there in verse 6. Because you are His sons,

God sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. The objective reality of our sonship is secured by the work of Jesus, but our experience of it, our assurance of it is granted by this other sending, the sending of the Spirit, who enables us to recognize who we are, to recognize who we have become, to recognize that we belong to God, that we are part of His family, and so can cry out to Him, Abba, Father. There is so much more that could and perhaps should be said of all that is envisaged and implied in our sonship, the full rights of sons. The very language is very rich and suggestive of something that would need to be delved into with much greater care.

[ 25 : 10 ] Our status as heirs of God because we are sons, just to mention one avenue of discovery. But the heart of the matter is this, that the purpose of God's redeeming work on our behalf is that we might become His sons, that we might become members of His family. When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, His one and only Son, to pay the ultimate price in the giving of His own life to death on the cross in our place.

Why would He do such a thing that you and I might be able to call Him and call out to Him, Abba, Father. In the language of the psalmist, plenteous redemption, plenteous indeed. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your Son. We thank You for the sending of Your Son to be our Savior, to be our Redeemer, to pay that ultimate price, that ransom price for us. And we acknowledge with gratitude that the price paid was His own life.

He gave His own life as a ransom for many. We acknowledge that we are by nature, by descent, by our shared humanity with our first father, Adam, we are under the law. We are slaves to the law.

We are under the curse of the law. But we thank You for what Jesus has done to liberate us, to rescue us, to break the shackles of that slavery, and to deliver us to that wonderful status as sons and daughters of the living and true God. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.