

## REDEMPTION

Open your Bible with me to Galatians 4. This past Thursday night, I had the privilege of spending time with our elders and staff during our annual Christmas party. Multiple times I looked around at this group of friends and thanked the Lord for the gift these men and women are to our church, and to me personally.

This year, we went to see Andrew Peterson and his merry band of musicians play through one of my favorite albums entitled, “Behold the Lamb of God,” which he describes as “The true tall-tale of the coming of Christ.” Once the audience was seated neatly in place, the guitars were tuned up, and the lights grew dark, we sang through the pages of the Old Testament and into the New. Each song played its part in telling the story of the Savior’s birth. The chorus of the title track struck me in a profound way this time around as we listened to the heart of Christmas and the heart of the gospel itself:

Behold, the Lamb of God  
Who takes away our sin  
Behold the Lamb of God  
The life and light of men  
Behold the Lamb of God  
Who died and rose again  
Behold the Lamb of God who comes  
To take away our sin.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps there is no nation on earth that celebrates Christmas more passionately than here in America. Parties and festivities fill up almost every day of December, decorations and lights adorn our homes. We share Christmas cookies, concerts, carols, and cards. Yet many will go through the motions of this season without recognizing that there is a great purpose that lies behind all of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Peterson, *Behold the Lamb of God* (Nashville: Centricity Music, 2004).

Christmas is more than the story of a displaced family, singing angels, amazed shepherds, and searching wise men.<sup>2</sup> It is a story that begins in the book of Genesis and stretches all the way to Revelation, and at the center of it all is the birth of this baby who is Christ the Lord. Jesus came to take away our sin, to shine in our darkness. He came to live, and die, and live again – so that we too might live, and die, and live again with him forever. So, for us to make the most of this Christmas season, in order to keep Christmas, we must see the purpose of why Jesus came.

### **Sermon Summary**

Galatians 4:4-5 not only highlights the plan of God that would unfold in the fullness of time, but also shows the purpose of God in sending His Son. Jesus came at the appointed time to redeem us from the law, sin, and death. With His life He fulfilled the law of God and then He died for those of us who never could. This is the heart of the Christmas message. This truly is good news of great joy: that God has brought us “Redemption” through His Son. We continue our study of this passage by focusing on the next phrase, and from it we fill out our doctrine of Christ. We look first at *Christ the Promised Redeemer* and secondly at *Christ the Perfect Redeemer*.

*<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law.*

### **Christ the Promised Redeemer**

The first truth about our Savior I want to show you is that He is *Christ the Promised Redeemer*. When I was in elementary school, I had hoped to be a doctor when I grew up. So, one Christmas I asked for a microscope. I loved putting samples on the trays and exploring things I could see. In a sense that is what we are doing in our study of these few verses. We are putting them under the microscope. However, for us to understand the bigger picture we need to come

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<sup>2</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Come, Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017), 66.

up from our subject at hand and look with a wider lens at what Scripture says about the redemption that Christ accomplished on our behalf.

Paul writes that it was in the fullness of time that God sent His son to redeem those under the law. As we saw last week, this plan of redemption was not a new idea, or a change of plans for God along the way. No, God had been planning this redemption from before time began. (Eph. 1:4) Yet, before we look at our passage itself, I want to answer the question, “*Who is this promised redeemer God’s people were waiting for?*”

### **Promises of Salvation and Redemption**

I would like to show you four specific places in the Old Testament where we find prophetic passages that point to the incarnate Christ and the redemption He brought to the people of God. These stops along the way will be brief, and I would commend you to continue in study of them to help us fill out our understanding of the identity of this one lying “Away in a Manger.” We begin all the way back at the beginning of Scripture where we learn that this promised redeemer is *A. The Seed of the Woman* (Genesis 3:15). After Adam and Eve broke God’s command not to eat of the forbidden fruit, God outlined punishment for their sin. Yet, amid His judgment, we hear the first whisper of a redemption to come. God says to the slithering serpent in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This phrase contains the redemptive story line of the entire Bible, promising that though holy war will be waged between the two lines, God will provide salvation fully and finally in the work of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately it would be the seed of the woman, or as our passage says “the one born of woman” who would come to destroy the works of the devil.<sup>4</sup> Satan would bruise the heel of Christ in His

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<sup>3</sup> R. Andrew Compton, “The Seed of the Woman,” *Table Talk*, December 2018.

<sup>4</sup> See 1 John 3:8.

crucifixion, but Christ would crush the head of the serpent with His resurrection. To say it another way, God promises one day to redeem His people.

In Genesis 12, we see that Jesus is *B. The Blessed Son of Abraham* (Genesis 12:2-3).<sup>5</sup>

God promised to Abraham:

<sup>2</sup>And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

We see God fulfill His promise initially through Abraham’s sons Isaac and Jacob, but ultimately this promise is fulfilled in Jesus. It is Jesus who is the one whose name is made great and through whom all the families of the earth were blessed once and for all. Galatians 3:14 explains that it is in Christ that “the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles,” and in Galatians 3:29, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed.” So, through Jesus, “the Blessed Son of Abraham” you and I have been brought into this “great nation,” the kingdom of God.

Jesus is also *C. The New Exodus* (Exodus 6:6-7). We spent the better part of two years on this, so I will cover it quickly, but I had to include this because in the book of Galatians, Paul mentions both Abraham and Moses as examples pointing to what Jesus has accomplished for us. Exodus 6:6-7 says,

<sup>6</sup> ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will *redeem you* with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

These expressions are written in the past tense in Hebrew, as God speaks with absolute certainty about these events coming to pass.<sup>6</sup> In the book of Exodus we witness God redeem His people from slavery in Egypt and lead them into freedom so they could serve and worship Him

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<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 1:1

<sup>6</sup> Walt Kaiser, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 1: Genesis-Leviticus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 392.

alone. At the first Passover, the requirement for their sin was either the blood of the first-born son, *or* the blood of a spotless lamb. In the New Exodus of Christ, the payment of redemption was made in full by the blood of the firstborn Son who *was* the Spotless Lamb.

Finally, we see that this baby whose birth was announced by angels and attended by shepherds would grow to be *D. The Suffering Servant* (Isaiah 53:5-6). In the middle of an extended section speaking of the Savior to come, Isaiah prophesied that this promised Messiah would bear the penalty for the sins of His people once and for all:

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

## Hope Renewed

My hope in showing you this is primarily that we would see with fresh eyes the identity of Jesus. Yet, I hope also that your hope in Jesus might be renewed. Brothers and sisters, our Promise-Making God is a Promise-Keeping God. Who He has been in ages past He will be throughout endless ages. What He has spoken He will surely bring to completion. His word and His gospel are the only foundation strong enough for us to build our hope upon. In Christ, the “I Will” promises of God become, “It is Finished.” Jesus is the promised seed of the woman, the fulfillment of Abraham’s covenant, the new exodus, and the Suffering Servant. He brought salvation and redeemed us as He crushed the head of the serpent. He has brought blessing to the nations. He has delivered us from the law’s just demands. He brought forgiveness of sins to His people. How should we respond to this? Psalm 130:7–8 says it well:

<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.

<sup>8</sup> And he will redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.

So, let me look at you now and remind the people I dearly love, oh, Trails Church, hope in the Lord! Who is the one we hope in? He is Christ the Promised Redeemer.

### **Christ the Perfect Redeemer**

The second truth about our Savior I want to show you is that He is *Christ the Perfect Redeemer*. As we look at our text a bit closer, let's slide these words under the microscope as it were, "born under the law, to redeem those under the law." The truth magnified here is that in the incarnation, the Lord Almighty stooped so low in wondrous condescension and perfect humility. The author of God's law subjected Himself to its demands. The one who had all authority over the law, placed Himself under its rule. If last week our focus was the plan of God, now our focus is the *purpose* of the incarnation. For what purpose was Christ born under the law? Our text says is plainly: to redeem His people. John Murray once explained it like this:

Christ as the (pastor) of his people came under the curse and condemnation due to sin and he also fulfilled the law of God in all its positive requirements. In other words, he took care of the guilt of sin and perfectly fulfilled the demands of righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

### **Living and Dying In Our Place**

As we consider Jesus both fulfilling the demands of righteousness and bearing our guilt and sin, I want us to answer the question, "How did Christ redeem us?" It is a two-part answer and each piece is essential. The first part is this: *A. Jesus Lived in Our Place*. Sometimes seen as a secondary matter, I am showing you that it is not. Paul had just described Jesus as "born of a woman" showing His humanity when he adds He was also "born under the law." Not only was He *a* man, but He also was a *Jewish* man. He grew up in a Jewish home reading the Torah, praying to His Heavenly Father, attending synagogue, and every festival, faithfully fulfilling every little part of the law as no one before or after Him has ever done.<sup>8</sup> Jesus

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<sup>7</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2020), 303.

explained in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” And this is what the Son of God did.

Paul’s point in showing this is that he is wanting the church in Galatia to know the freedom and joy that the gospel has won for them! They had believed on Christ and been set free from their sin. They were walking in the truth when a group of people from within the church began to say that they could not be saved by faith alone but by faith in Christ *and* their obedience to the law for salvation (the works they performed). Only a few verses earlier in Galatians 3:23, Paul uses this phrase “under the law” to describe the Jews before the coming of Christ. There, he showed that the law was like a tutor until Israel had reached maturity. The law was the kindergarten of God, but in Christ they had received a diploma of graduation. There was no reason to go back! Paul wants the church to understand that now that Christ has fulfilled the law, there is no reason for them to try and do what has already been done.

Christianity is not like any other religion, is it? Every other religion says if you want to be made right with God, you have to obey the rules. If you want to be accepted by God, you have to make yourself righteous and clean yourself up and, in the end, hope you did enough good things. But the gospel says that because we could never make ourselves good enough, we couldn’t keep the rules, so God sent His Son to keep them on our behalf and now we trust in Him for our salvation as His obedience is credited to us.

In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul warns believers of the same thing. Many of his letters are written to people who had trusted in Jesus as their Savior, but then slip back into trying to save themselves through their works. In Philippians 3, he points out that if anyone could try to stand on their own resume, it would be him, the Apostle Paul. He pulls his resume out of a dusty briefcase and reads it to them, “He was circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee... as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” Yet, Paul knew that as much as he had tried to fulfill the law’s demands, he wasn’t actually blameless. He couldn’t do it. So, he takes his impressive resume and throws it in the rubbish bin. Why? Because Paul understands that there is no righteousness that

comes from keeping the law, but only through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:8-9). What Paul could not do, and what you and I could not achieve, Christ has done on our behalf. Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Judah, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law, its author and perfecter, as to righteousness under the law, truly blameless. Jesus perfectly obeyed the whole of the law, the ten commandments, the great commandment as He perfectly loved His Father in obedience to all His commands and in perfect love to His neighbor as He laid down His life for His friends. Christ came to do what we could never do. He perfectly obeyed the law of God in our place so that a bunch of lawbreaking, sinful people might be declared righteous before the Holy God.

But that is not all He did. The second part of the answer to the question, “How did Christ redeem us?” is this: *Jesus Died in Our Place*. Jesus died as the substitute bearing the curse of our sin. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” The curse for all who broke God’s commands was death, and on the cross, Jesus died the perfect substitutionary death in our place so that the wrath of God toward your sin would not fall on you, believer, but be satisfied in the death of Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:21 adds, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Kings may, for various reasons, visit their subjects; but they do not think of taking upon themselves their poverty, their sickness, or their sorrow. They could not if they would, and they would not if they could; but our divine Lord, when he came... took upon him our flesh.<sup>9</sup>

This baby who was born in Bethlehem was born to both live and die in our place.

### **The Fruit of Redemption**

As we think about Christ living and dying in our place to redeem us from sin, and death – it is not meant to create in us any sort of attitude that would say, “Well, now that I’m

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<sup>9</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “*Good Tidings of Great Joy*”: *Christ’s Incarnation the Foundation of Christianity* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2023), 92.



redeemed I can live however I want to.” No, we must understand that we are not saved by our good works but we were saved *for* good works. (Eph. 2:8-10) As Martin Luther said, “God is not in need of your good works, but your neighbor is.” Yet, let our works not become an achievement we try to stand on, but let us trust completely in the grace of God for our salvation. Grace sweeps the leg of all self-righteousness. We stand on the righteousness of Christ alone.

Yet, redemption is meant to move us to personal holiness. This is never in question. Most of Paul’s pastoral epistles begin by rooting people in the good news of the gospel, and then they “turn the page” if you will to describe how believers ought to live, not trying to earn God’s approval but because they have it already. Galatians is a bit different in this approach, yet near the end of this letter pleading with people to believe in Christ alone for their salvation, Paul can’t help but come back to what the fruit of a life looks like that has been redeemed. In Galatians 5:22–23, he writes “<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control.” These are expressions of a redeemed life.

### **A Gospel Call to the Unredeemed**

As we come to a close, let me make an observation that is true every week we gather: this room is spiritually split in two by two groups of people: those who have trusted in Jesus as their redeemer and those who have not. Let me speak to any of you who, perhaps like Paul before Jesus saved him, have lived your entire life trying to do enough good things in order to get God to love you, trying hard to get God to like you. Or maybe you have been fine to break all the rules! But whether you are a law keeper or a law breaker, the gospel says that you cannot break enough of God’s law to exhaust his grace, and you cannot obey enough of God’s law to earn his grace. And this is the message of Christmas, the offer of the gospel – to those who have exhausted every other chance, Christ comes to bring true, lasting forgiveness. How do you experience this? By collapsing into the mercy of Christ, by repenting of your sin and believing on Jesus as your redeemer.

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Who takes away our sin

Behold the Lamb of God  
The life and light of men  
Behold the Lamb of God  
Who died and rose again  
Behold the Lamb of God who comes  
To take away our sin.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Peterson, *Behold the Lamb of God*.

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