

SERMON: DIVINE TIMING

Galatians 4:4-5

(4) But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Introduction

Let me say at the beginning, this may be more of a lecture than a sermon. The written outline carries a slightly different format than usual. It's the same soup warmed over, and we dare not change the recipe. We are, however, putting it in a different bowl.

This very familiar Scripture, like many, can easily be partially exegeted. The Scripture is packed with so much meaning that we can easily settle for the meaning that is readily apparent and exclude the meaning that does not reach out and grab us. It is like not squeezing all of the juice out of a sweet, luscious orange. We become satisfied with the juice that readily flows freely and never squeeze out all of the content. So, let's squeeze this orange and extract as much juice as we are able.

When perusing this Scripture, it is easy to limit God and see Him only as a positive opportunist. An opportunist does not make the favorable condition, but is wise enough to take advantage of it. This is like the surfer, who does not make the wave in the ocean, but is wise enough and skilled enough to ride it with joy and exuberance. When the time was right, God sent His Son. Not only was God taking advantage of the favorable time by sending His Son, He made the favorable time become a reality. Not only was He a positive opportunist, he was the "opportunity originator." Not only did God respond to the fullness of the time, He made the time full of opportunities. God was behind the scenes working things out and making things happen. God is working when it seems as if He is not working. God works in the sunlight, and sometimes, He works in the shadows. Sometimes, He works in open view, and sometimes, He works behind closed doors. God is always working for our good.

In this text, Paul figuratively refers to the custom of the day, when fathers had to legally make a son an heir. A biological son was not an automatic heir. At the time the father designated, He would sign the necessary legal documents to make the son a legal heir. This is what is translated as adoption. It is not the same as adoption in our culture. There was not and is not an exact English equivalent to the Greek word *huiothesia*. If the father refused to sign the documents because he thought the son was irresponsible, or of weak character, or because of some other extenuating circumstances, the son

would have no legal rights to his father's estate. The time of the signing of the documents, if at all, was left to the discretion of the father. Paul used this metaphor to explain that through Jesus we are heirs to eternal life. Jesus was the Father's legal proxy who signed the document when He went to the cross.

Now, Paul takes a turn and uses an agricultural metaphor to explain the timing our heavenly Father used to have the documents signed to make us heirs. The term fullness of time refers to the time when the crop is ready for harvest from the field. It is used when the fruit is ready to be picked from the tree or from the vine. We all know crops or fruit can be harvested too early or too late. If too early, the crop is not fully developed. If too late, it will become rotten. This is why Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Since the time was left to the discretion of the father, let's see why our heavenly Father chose this era of human history to sign the documents to make us heirs to eternal life. Let's see why the time was right for the coming of the Messiah.

Exposition

1. The Time Was Right Religiously.

A. (After The Exile, Ezra Rediscovered/Organized The Sacred Scrolls.

(Now The Old Testament Was Available In A Systematic Order.)

B. Synagogues Were In Every City For Worship & Teaching.

(The Apostles First Taught Christianity In The Synagogues.)

2. The Time Was Right Culturally.

(Because Of Alexander The Great, Greek Was Spoken Everywhere.)

(It Provided A Common Language For Trade And Culture.)

(Greek Made It Possible For The Gospel To Be Preached In A Brief Period Of Time Without Struggling Over Language Barriers.)

(The New Testament Was Written In Greek - A Very Precise Language.)

(The Old Testament Was Translated To Greek For Greek-Speaking Jews. This translation was called the Septuagint.)

3. The Time Was Right Politically.

(The Roman Empire Had Expanded To Their Known World.)

(Because Of The *Pax Romana* [Peace Of Rome] There Were No Wars Between Super Powers.)

(Money And Focus Could Be Spent On Civil Endeavors.)

(The Romans Had Built A Far Reaching Highway System.)

(The Highways And *Pax Romana* Provided Free Movement Throughout The Empire.)

(This Free Movement Allowed The Wise Men To Come And Worship Jesus.)

(This Free Movement Allowed Joseph To Travel To Egypt To Protect Jesus.)

(Missionaries Used The Highways To Travel And Spread The Gospel.)

(The Romans Had An Excellent Postal System, Which The Apostles Utilized To Send Their Epistles To The Fledgling Church Congregations.)

Closing Thoughts

Please remember, God's timing is perfect. God's time schedule is not the same as our schedule. This was reflected in our oral tradition: "He may not come when you want Him, but He is always on time." Dottie Peoples put it in her signature song, ***He's An On-Time God.***

End Notes

1. Because Paul changed metaphors and thoughts so quickly, some scholars think he suffered from ADD. If that is the case, then that is encouraging news. God can use all of us no matter the weakness or deficiency. See 2nd Corinthians 12:9-10
2. The Greek word *huiothesia* literally means "son placing." The father places the son in line to receive the inheritance. Ladies please don't get mad at me. It does not say "daughter placing" This was a male-dominated society. I had nothing to do with it.

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