



The First Sunday After Christmas
December 29, 2013
Pastor Daniel Naumann
Galatians 4:4-7

SONS, PROTECTED BY THE FATHER



Slavery can be a touchy subject in our nation's history, can't it? Saying the wrong thing about slavery can really set someone off. It is a part of our history, and while we certainly won't deny it or even shy away from talking about it in the conversation of history, we would be wise to tread carefully when talking about slavery. Why is it such a touchy subject? Well, where do you start? There are so many atrocities that have been connected to slavery in our nation's history, and any other nation's history if they've had slavery for that matter. No one wants to have anything to do with slavery. It's as simple as that. Now, to be sure, not every owner of slaves in history was utterly cruel to their slaves, but even in the best of circumstances, you are still a slave, and that's not pleasant, not desirable. You are not your own. You don't have control over where you go or what you do. You are bound to someone else. They determine your action, your course of life, your profession, what you eat, what you drink, what you do. And the worst part about such slavery is that you cannot get out of it on your own. You can wish yourself out of slavery or work hard at your job as much as you want, but your freedom is still completely dependent on someone else. The only way you can get out of slavery is by the grace of the owner.

With all these things in mind about slavery, you might be surprised to hear Paul say that we are all slaves by nature. We aren't slaves to a human owner or to a country. We are "slaves to the basic principles of the world," Paul tells us in the verse just before our text. What exactly does that mean? Well that means, very simply, that we are slaves to sin, we are slaves to death, we are slaves to living up to the law God demands us to obey. You see, as Paul describes us in verse 5, we are under law. By nature we are bound to live up to the expectations that God Almighty demands of us. We are under that law, and we are not our own masters. We

must live up to this. But of course, there is problem with this situation. We cannot obey those laws perfectly. We sin daily by nature, and we fall into sin constantly. In fact, Paul tells us that by nature we are even slaves to sin. Jesus used the term slavery to describe sinners as well, saying, "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin." (John 8:34)

Talk about a hopeless situation, slavery to sin is as hopeless as it gets. Sinning once is never enough, but sin always leads to more sin. And the worst part is that our sinful nature likes that lifestyle of slavery to sin. Any chance it gets it leads us back down that dark path to such slavery. Can you imagine living the life of a slave to a human and waking up every day wishing that you could get your freedom? It would be horrible to know that there's nothing you can do. Every day you would wake up to the same enslaved situation. That's what we are by nature when we are slaves to sin. Waking up every day hoping that we can change our lives, but never able to live up to what God demands of us. No matter how hard we try to come to God by living up to the law, we cannot go to him. People use excuses like, "I'm not as bad as this person or that person." Or they'll fool themselves into thinking, "Well I'm a pretty good person, even if I'm not perfect." But in the end, that still just comparing ourselves to standards that are less than the perfect standard our God expects of us.

That's why he had to come to us. That's why, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." A helpless and hopeless situation was made right when our God sent his Son to buy our freedom from sin and death. That is what we have been given in Christ. God came down to us by sending his Son to take our place under that same law that we could not live up to. But Jesus could. He took the burden of that law, the yoke of living under it, and he lived up to it perfectly. By obeying the law completely, Jesus set us free from it. He gives us his perfection, which is all God sees when he looks at us

now. Not only that, but Jesus has also set us free from the obligation to fulfill that law to get into heaven. Our salvation is not dependent on how well we can live up to the law, but it's dependent on Christ's perfection. We are free from the law. We are free from death. Heaven is ours. We are no longer slaves, but we are sons, Paul says. "To redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

What does it mean to be a son? It means that we have been given an inheritance. It means that we have received all of the benefits Christ won for us on the cross. He has won for us a room in heaven with our name on it, and he has given it to us freely. He has won for us the favor of God the Father. No longer do we look at him as a master who threatens to condemn us to hell, but rather we look at him as our dear Father in heaven who takes care of us. Jesus has set us free from our sinful nature as well. No longer do we have to submit to him and obey our sinful desires, but we have the gospel, the true power to fight against the temptations of the sinful nature and Satan. And we look forward to the day when we will live perfectly in heaven without any sinful nature to tempt us, without any devil to try to get us to fall. We have the full protection of our Father, won for us by our brother, the Father's Son. We are no longer slaves, but we are sons along with Jesus. Everything he has is now ours.

And there's more for us here as well. Notice how we address our heavenly Father now. "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'" Abba is the Aramaic word for father. It's more of the homely address of a father. It's how an Israelite son would address his dad. "Abba." It's a term of love and trust, not as much of a formal term to address a father with. It's the term a son would use to ask for something they need from their dad. This is how we address our heavenly Father now, not as a tyrant or a master, but as a loving Father who wants nothing but the very best for his dear children. And he gives it too.

Notice how the Father protected Jesus, his Son. "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son," Paul

said. God the Father had the power to direct the course of history all around the event of sending his Son into the world to redeem us as sons. He protected him through harmful situations so that Jesus could fulfill exactly what he needed to do to make us God's children. Our Gospel this morning is an example of that. God the Father made sure that Jesus was protected from King Herod. Not only that, but in protecting Jesus from King Herod, the Father fulfilled a number of promises that we needed him to fulfill in order for us to be properly bought back. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but he fled to Egypt, as Hosea said he would in our Old Testament lesson this morning. That's a promise kept. Then, when Jesus returned with Joseph, he lived in the town of Nazareth, which fulfilled yet another OT promise. The heavenly Father directed the course of history for the benefit and protection of his Son, Jesus.



You are now God's sons as well. That means that you have that very same protection. The promise made through Hosea, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son," that was a promise of protection that applies to you now as well. God the heavenly Father loves you like a son, and he will lead you through every situation he has placed you in. He promises to do so. We may not always see how or understand why God arranged the events in our lives the way he did. We may not always understand fully his purposes for us, but we trust

him because he's our Abba, he's our Dad. And he's the most dependable Dad in the world. He is perfect, he is loving, and he is kind. He also has the power to protect us, even to change history for us, which is exactly what he did by sending Jesus.

No one in their right minds would actually suggest that any society should go back to a time of slavery. We shouldn't presume to do that for ourselves either. The devil and our sinful nature are cunning, and they know how to tempt us into sin. But our Father is watching over us and he is protecting us. He has sent his Son to us to redeem us, and he will make sure that we are protected. Why? Because we are his dear sons, and he is our dear Father. Amen.