

"Right on Time, Just When We Need His Grace"

"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." Galatians 4:4-7

When a new year begins, it's the right time to do some new things. Sometimes the newness of a new year can't wait. A few years ago on New Year's Eve, a competition labeled as "the battle of the babies" developed in New York City. Precisely at midnight two babies were born, rivaling each other for the title of the first baby of the New Year. On Long Island, a bouncing baby boy named Maxim was born. At the exact same time, in the borough of Brooklyn, little Zayden was born, weighing in at seven pounds, one ounce. It was a tie. No one could stop these little gifts from God from making their New Year's entrance into the world.

That's just how it goes sometimes. When it's time, it's time!

We are just about to enter 2024. This year in April our city right here will be a mess of excitement and confusion over a total solar eclipse. People will come from all over to get a good view of it. Schools have already announced a day off for students. No one on earth planned this. No one on earth can control the timing of this event. When it's the right time, you can't stop it.

But what about you? Is this finally the right time for real change in your life? What new step in life is getting ready to break through? Is it time for you to start something? Or is it time for you to stop something? Are you thinking about your health or diet? Are you evaluating a habit in your life that needs to change right now? Has the right time come for forgiveness or reconciliation? What is the right time in your life? Maybe you've been waiting, watching, and wondering. Perhaps now is the right time!

What I want you to know today is that God does things differently than we do. The Bible says it clearly; He is the One Who makes all things new in His time.

The Apostle Paul, who had a miserable old life, filled with hatred and destruction, experienced God's renewing work at the right time. Paul gave all his time and energy to persecute and torment followers of Jesus. But the risen Savior appeared to him personally, led him out of destruction and bitterness, and filled him with the Holy Spirit through baptism. Paul was a brand new person. He had a brand new outlook. He received the love and forgiveness of Jesus and his life was dramatically changed. Paul himself proclaimed to brand new believers in 2 Corinthians 5: ***"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come"***

2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV .

Suddenly, Paul had the hope of heaven instead of the dread of another difficult day. Right on time, Jesus brought His grace into Paul's life.

God knows all about timing; and that's why, in His Name, I ask you, "What newness is it time for in your life?"

Over the Christmas season you celebrated God's good timing. St. Paul tells us what caused Christmas: ***"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption"*** Galatians 4:4-5 .

It was the right time for Jesus to be born. God couldn't hold back anymore as He sent His only Son into our world to make the biggest Christmas purchase ever. The price was high: the purpose of Christmas was that Jesus would give His life on a cross for the forgiveness of your sins and mine. That gift to the world was much too big to wrap. How could someone wrap up a gift as huge as: forgiveness of our sins, the blessings of eternal life, hope that lasts forever, and a brand new future empowered by God's Spirit. The result of this gift is that just as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, we too are raised with Him through baptism so we can walk in newness of life just in time.

Have you been waiting for a new life? a fresh start? a brand new beginning? Have you been yearning for help and hope? God's

Word brings you the good news today that ***"now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of your salvation"*** (2 Corinthians 6:2 NIV).

The writer of the book of Hebrews calls out to you and me as the New Year dawns. He says: ***"See to it...that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God...As has just been said: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts'"*** (Hebrews 3:12-15 NIV).

I'm telling you directly then, in the Name of Jesus now is the right time for you to believe. It is the right time to return to God, to ask for His help, to let Him carry the load, to trust the risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

I hope that you've been waiting for this time! Let it be the right time for you. God's Word promises: ***"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"*** (Romans 10:9). You don't have to solve all of life's problems or carry the load of responsibility for everything. You don't have to figure out everything or know all the answers. If you're tired of weariness, your anger, your regrets, your failures, your struggles, let today be the day of salvation for you. Let today be the right time to receive God's grace in your life. Have faith in Jesus, the One Who can handle the load, Who solved life's problems, and Who promises to be with you always. Ask Him to be your help, your peace, your consolation, and your salvation. It's the right time.

Sometimes you do have to wait for the right time, don't you?

The story is told of a group of women that met for Bible study. While studying in the book of Malachi, chapter three, they came across a verse which says: ***"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."*** That verse puzzled the women and they wondered how this statement applied to the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out more about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

The following week, the woman called up a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him while at work. She didn't

mention anything about the reason for her interest, beyond curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith work, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire, where the flames were the hottest so as to burn away all of the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot for what seemed like entirely too much time; then she thought again about the verse, ***"He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver."***

She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the entire time that the silver was being refined. The man said yes, that not only did he have to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eye on it the entire time it was in the fire; too short a time, still full of impurities; if the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman sat silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "But how do you know when the silver is fully refined?"

He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy--when I see my image in it."

God wants to make you new. His desire is that all of His blessing, His favor, His grace to be delivered to your life. He literally wants you to be "recreated in His image again" as His dearly loved son or daughter!

Haven't you waited long enough to receive this? Are you finished trying to handle life's deep problems by yourself? Are your cares crushing you? Are you ready to live as a blood-bought child of the Savior God?

Galatians 4; let me paraphrase it this way: ***"Because you are sons and daughters, God has sent his Spirit of his Son Jesus into our hearts, so we can cry, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, you're a part of the family. And if you're a part of the family, you're an heir of God"*** (Galatians 4:6-7 paraphrased).

It was a just in time right time for little May Lynn. She was a newborn brought to her first foster home in a far away Asian nation.

Her parents, her birth parents, had abandoned her and there really wasn't any room for her in the orphanage. And her first foster family, they merely took her in for the money. They neglected her, barely feeding her, not even speaking with her. But just in time, a couple from the United States received the news that they could adopt her.

May Lynn's 2-year time of anguish and neglect was over. At the same time this couple's 10-year wait was over. They waited for 10 years to adopt a child. They saved money, they prayed, they waited, and finally, God opened the door. It was the right time. They flew across the ocean to pick up their little girl and brought her home.

But for this family, love even takes time too. While they were filled with joy as a family, it didn't take long for them to realize the challenges involved in loving little May Lynn. Her 2-year trauma in her first foster home left her terrified of this new family situation. She didn't say a word. She suffered from a variety of illnesses. She wasn't well-nourished and had no pattern of dependable sleep. But she was theirs. They loved her. They struggled, day by day, but today, little May Lynn delights in seeing her mommy and daddy with a whole new life ahead of her. New life and love, just in time.

"You are no longer a slave, you're a part of the family. And if you're a part of the family, you're an heir of God" (Galatians 4:6-7 paraphrased).

That's just a glimpse of what God has done for you through Jesus Christ. The Father sent His Son into this world just in time to save you and me. He adopted you. He made you His own. He paid the price, met the challenges, shouldered your maladies, overcame your neglect and fear, and made you His own. You too now have a new life by the grace of God through faith in Jesus.

So, take a hard look at the old things; the things of yesterday, without God's grace. Are there past things that torment you, present things that plague you with worry, future things that fill you with anxiety? Your living Savior will take care of it. Your life is new. It's a new chapter for you today. Today's the day to be His own, now is the time for His freedom and salvation by grace to be in your life.

Now is the time to live as His child, His heir; not in the bondage and prison of your sin and guilt, but alive in His forgiveness and

grace in the freedom that comes with following Jesus through the open door of grace, and mercy, and peace.

And that life can be yours right now. Just like a lady I heard about who was going through some very difficult and trying circumstances. She was experiencing major problems in her marriage; her job was unfulfilling and was causing her heartache. She became so distraught over her circumstances that she just felt like giving up. She felt lonely, dejected, isolated. She had tried everything, but she got nowhere. Finally she came to the point of exhaustion and felt that there was no way out of her terrible circumstances and she even felt there would be no more joy in her life. Have you ever felt like that?

One day, frustrated and lonely, she just sat in her kitchen and began to cry. Just then she noticed a small sparrow had somehow gotten into her kitchen, so she opened the door thinking the sparrow would simply fly out the door. To her surprise the sparrow kept flying into the closed window that was just above the door. She did everything she could to redirect the bird's attention, but to no avail as it flew into the window again and again and again. The bird became weaker and weaker each time as it hit the glass. When the bird got so tired that it couldn't fly, it just started to walk on the ground. As it walked, it made its way right out the open door to freedom. When the sparrow began to regain his strength, off he flew, free again.

It was as though God literally opened up this woman's spiritual eyes. She realized that in just about every area of her life she was behaving just like this sparrow. She was trying in her own way to get out of the confining situations she was in, each time being knocked down in defeat. When she reacted harshly to her family members - knocked down! Not giving her best at work - knocked down! Paying back evil for evil done to her - knocked down! Saying and doing things that she knew were wrong - knocked down!

She finally realized that all she had to do was do just like this sparrow - to very humbly walk in the power of God's grace and mercy and allow Him to work out all her heartaches and difficulties.

She realized God was calling her to walk with Him through the door He would open for her.

This New Year, now's the time! Like the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:7, ***"In a favorable time, I (the Lord) listened to you, and in a day of salvation, I the Lord helped you."*** Now's the time. Look for God's gracious open doors; don't miss what God is graciously giving you at the right time. It's the treasure of forgiveness. It's the blessing of a new beginning. Go to God in prayer today even more boldly. This New Year is the right time for you. You never know what surprises God has in store yet for you.

"You are no longer a slave, you're a part of the family. And if you're a part of the family, you're an heir of God" (Galatians 4:6-7 paraphrased).

In Jesus, you are no longer a slave to your own sin and helplessness. You are God's child, an heir of everlasting life, an heir of eternal hope, an heir of the forgiveness of sins. You are an heir of the great blessing of sharing the light of Jesus Christ in a dark and difficult world. You are God's child. It is today! Right on time, just when you need God's grace for life today and forever.

Amen.