***At Just the Right Time***

**Christmas Letters: Galatians December 19, 2021**

***But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son,  
born of a woman, born under the law,  
to redeem those under the law,  
that we should receive the full rights as sons.*Galatians 4:4**

**Checking my spiritual chronograph**

1. How did God’s history prepare the world for Jesus?

2. How did God’s promises prepare the world for Jesus?

**Something special about “sonship” and “daughtership” faith**

*26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

*What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2 He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Galatians 3:26-4:7

1. This kind of faith means I’m baptized into . . . clothed with . . . one in . . . and belong to Jesus!

2. This kind of faith gives us access to the riches of God

3. This kind of faith means I’m not obligated to the “basic principles” of this world

4. This kind of faith makes Jesus’ “Abba, Father” relationship with the Father ours

**What we learn about God’s redemption and his *hesed*  love**

*7 The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.*

Deuteronomy 7

1. affection: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. generosity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. faithfulness: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What we learn about Jesus**

*4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Galatians 4:4-5

1. “Born of a woman” fulfills God’s Genesis 3:15 promise

15 *And I will put enmity between you and the woman,*

*and between your offspring and hers;*

*he will crush your head,*

*and you will strike his heel.”*

Genesis 3:15

2. Jesus was not just human, but he obligated himself to the law for our sake

*13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

Galatians 3:13-14

**What we learn about redemption**

1. Two pictures of pre-redemption: prisoner and slave (more on Wednesday night!)

*23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

Galatians 3:23

*8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.   
9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

Galatians 4:8

2. We can practice “redeeming the time”

*2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Colossians 4 (see Ephesians 5:15-21 for a Holy Spirit perspective)

3. Redeemed means freedom to serve

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery . . . .* [the example of circumcision]

*13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

Galatians 5

**Review the “Advent in the Epistles” themes:**

1. The Epistles focus more on the cross than the manger

2. The Epistles connect the First and Second Advents

3. The Epistles always connect the incarnation with Christian living

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**Resources for the Galatians 4**

Be sure to check the [Bible Project’s poster](https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/) on Galatians.

Deffinbaugh has [a good series on Colossians](https://bible.org/series/galatians-gospel-and-gods-grace) with his sermon on this text at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/inferiority-immaturity-galatians-41-11*](https://bible.org/seriespage/inferiority-immaturity-galatians-41-11)

Maclaren has a helpful commentary at [*https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/mac/galatians-4.html*](https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/mac/galatians-4.html)

I appreciate F. F. Bruce’s NIGTC commentary on this passage (Eerdmans, 1982).

Spurgeon [has a wonderful sermon on this text](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiRrMbV1uf0AhVCLX0KHYL0Br4QFnoECAsQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.spurgeongems.org%2Fvols28-30%2Fchs1815.pdf&usg=AOvVaw330xC7oZrRvoUQy0av0o-2), “The Great Birthday”, attached below.

**THE GREAT BIRTHDAY AND OUR COMING OF AGE**

**NO. 1815**

***BY C. H. SPURGEON***

***“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:***

***But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,***

***made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive***

***the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit***

***of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.***

***Galatians 4:3-6.***

THE birth of our Lord Jesus Christ into this world is a wellspring of pure, unmingled joy. We

associate with His crucifixion much of sorrowful regret, but we derive from His birth at Bethlehem

nothing but delight. The angelic song was a fit accompaniment to the joyful event, and the filling of the

whole earth with peace and good will is a suitable consequence of the condescending fact. The stars of

Bethlehem cast no baleful light, we may sing with undivided joy, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son

is given.” When the Eternal God stooped from heaven and assumed the nature of His own creature who

had rebelled against Him, the deed could mean no harm to man. God in our nature is not God against us

but God with us. We may take up the young child in our arms and feel that we have seen the Lord’s

salvation, it cannot mean destruction to men.

I do not wonder that the men of the world celebrate the supposed anniversary of the great birthday as

a high festival with carols and banquets. Knowing nothing of the spiritual meaning of the mystery, they

yet perceive that it means man’s good, and so in their own rough way they respond to it. We who

observe no days which are not appointed of the Lord, rejoice continually in our Prince of Peace, and find

in our Lord’s manhood a fountain of consolation.

To those who are truly the people of God, the incarnation is the subject of a thoughtful joy, which

ever increases with our knowledge of its meaning, even as rivers are enlarged by many trickling brooks.

The Birth of Jesus not only brings us hope, but the certainty of good things. We do not merely speak of

Christ’s coming into relation with our nature, but of His entering into union with ourselves, for He has

become one flesh with us for purposes as great as His love. He is one with all of us who have believed in

His name.

Let us consider by the light of our text the special effect produced upon the church of God by the

coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh. You know, beloved, that His coming a second time will

produce a wonderful change upon the church. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.” We are

looking forward to His second advent for the uplifting of the church to a higher platform than that upon

which it now stands. Then shall the militant become triumphant and the laboring become exultant. Now

is the time of battle, but the second advent shall bring both victory and rest. Today our King commands

us to conflict, but soon He shall reign upon Mount Zion, with His ancients gloriously.

When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Then shall the bride

adorn herself with her jewels, and stand ready for her Husband. The whole waiting creation which now

groans and travails together in harmony with the birth pangs of the church shall then come to her time of

deliverance, and enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This is the promise of the second

advent, but what was the result of the first advent? Did that make any difference in the dispensation of

the church of God? Beyond all doubt it did. Paul here tells us that we were minors, in bondage under the

elements of the world, until the fullness of time was come, when “God sent forth his Son, made of a

woman, made under the law.”

Some will say, “He is speaking here of the Jews,” but he expressly guards us in the previous chapter

against dividing the church into Jews and Gentiles. To him it is only one church, and when he says we

were in bondage he is talking to the Galatian Christians, who were many of them Gentiles, but in truth

he regards them neither as Jews nor Gentiles, but as part of the one and indivisible church of God. In

those ages in which election mainly embraced the tribes of Israel there were always some chosen ones

beyond that visible line, and in the mind of God the chosen people were always regarded as neither Jews

nor Gentiles, but as one in Christ Jesus. So Paul lets us know that the church up to the time of the

coming of Christ was like a child at school under tutors and governors, or like a young man not yet

arrived at years of discretion, and therefore most fitly kept under restraint.

When Jesus came His great birthday was the day of the coming of age of the church, then believers

remained no more children, but became men in Christ Jesus. Our Lord by His first advent brought the

church up out of her nonage and her pupilage into a condition of maturity, in which it was able to take

possession of the inheritance, and claim and enjoy its rights and liberties. It was a wonderful step from

being under the law as a schoolmaster, to come from under its rod and rule into the freedom and power

of a full-grown heir, but such was the change for believers of the old time, and in consequence there was

a wonderful difference between the highest under the Old Testament and the lowest under the New.

Of them that are born of woman there was not born a greater than John the Baptist, and yet the least

in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he. John the Baptist may be compared to a youth of nineteen,

still an infant in law, still under his guardian, still unable to touch his estate, but the least believer in

Jesus has passed his minority, and is “no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God

through Christ.”

May the Holy Spirit bless the text to us while we use it thus. First, let us *consider in itself the joyful*

*mission of the Son of God,* and then let us consider *the joyful result which has come of that mission,* as it

is expressed in our text.

**I.** I invite you to CONSIDER THE JOYFUL MISSION OF THE SON OF GOD. The Lord of

heaven has come to earth, God has taken upon Himself human nature. Hallelujah!

*This great transaction was accomplished at the right time,* “When the fullness of the time was come,

God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.” The reservoir of time had to be filled by the inflowing of age

after age, and when it was full to the brim the Son of God appeared. Why the world should have

remained in darkness for four thousand years, why it should have taken that length of time for the

church to attain her full age, we cannot tell, but this we are told, that Jesus was sent forth when the

fullness of time was come. Our Lord did not come before His time nor behind His time, He was

punctual to His hour, and cried to the moment—“Lo, I come.” We may not curiously pry into the

reasons why Christ came when He did, but we may reverently muse thereon.

The birth of Jesus is the grandest light of history, the sun in the heavens of all time. It is the pole-star

of human destiny, the hinge of chronology, the meeting place of the waters of the past and the future.

Why did it happen at just that moment? Assuredly it was so predicted. There were prophecies many

which pointed exactly to that hour. I will not detain you just now with them, but those of you who are

familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures well know that, as with so many fingers, they pointed to the

time when the Shiloh should come, and the great sacrifice should be offered. He came at the hour which

God had determined.

The infinite Lord appoints the date of every event, all times are in His hand. There are no loose

threads in the providence of God, no stitches are dropped, and no events are left to chance. The great

clock of the universe keeps good time, and the whole machinery of providence moves with unerring

punctuality. It was to be expected that the greatest of all events should be most accurately and wisely

timed, and so it was. God willed it to be when and where it was, and that will is to us the ultimate

reason.

If we might suggest any reasons which can be appreciated by ourselves, we should view the date in

reference to the church itself as to the time of her coming of age. There is a measure of reason in

appointing the age of twenty-one as the period of a man’s majority, for he is then mature, and full

grown. It would be unwise to make a person to be of age while only ten, eleven, or twelve, everybody

would see that such boyish years would be unsuitable. On the other hand, if we were detained from

being of age till we were thirty, everyone would see that it was a needless and arbitrary postponement.

Now, if we were wise enough, we should see that the church of God could not have endured gospel

light earlier than the day of Christ’s coming, neither would it have been well to keep her in gloom

beyond that time. There was fitness about the date which we cannot fully understand, because we have

not the means of forming so decided an estimate of the life of a church as of the life of a man. God alone

knows the times and seasons for a church, and no doubt to Him the four thousand years of the old

dispensation made up a fit period for the church to abide at school, and bear the yoke in her youth.

The time of coming of age of a man has been settled by law with reference to those that are round

about him. It were not fit for servants that the child of five or six should be master, it were not fit in the

world of commerce that an ordinary boy of ten or twelve should be a trader on his own account. There is

a fitness with reference to relatives, neighbors, and dependents. So was there fitness in the time when the

church should come to her age with regard to the rest of mankind.

The world must know its darkness that it might value the light when it should shine forth, the world

must grow weary of its bondage that it might welcome the great Emancipator. It was God’s plan that the

world’s wisdom should prove itself to be folly, He meant to permit intellect and skill to play themselves

out, and then He would send His Son. He would allow man to prove his strength to be perfect weakness,

and then He would become his righteousness and strength. Then, when one monarch governed all lands,

and when the temple of war was shut after ages of bloodshed, the Lord whom the faithful sought

suddenly appeared. Our Lord and Savior came when time was full, and like a harvest ready for his

reaping, so will He come again when once more the age is ripe and ready for His presence.

Observe, concerning the first advent, that *the Lord was moving in it towards man*. “When the

fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son.” We moved not towards the Lord, but the Lord

towards us. I do not find that the world in repentance sought after its Maker. No, but the offended God

Himself in infinite compassion broke the silence, and came forth to bless His enemies. See how

spontaneous is the grace of God. All good things begin with Him.

It is very delightful that God should take an interest in every stage of the growth of His people from

their spiritual infancy to their spiritual manhood. As Abraham made a great feast when Isaac was

weaned, so does the Lord make a feast at the coming of age of His people. While they were as minors

under the law of ceremonial observances, He led them about and instructed them. He knew that the yoke

of the law was for their good, and He comforted them in the bearing of it, but He was glad when the

hour came for their fuller joy.

Oh, how truly did the Psalmist say, “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is

the sum of them!” Tell it out with joy and gladness, that the blessings of the new dispensation under

which we dwell are the spontaneous gifts of God, thoughtfully bestowed in great love, wherein He has

abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. When the fullness of time was come, God Himself

interposed to give His people their privileges, for it is not His will that any one of His people should

miss a single point of blessedness. If we are babes it is not His wish, He would have us men. If we are

famished it is not by His desire, He would fill us with the bread of heaven.

*Mark the divine interposition*—“God sent forth his Son.” I hope it may not seem wearisome to you if

I dwell upon that word “sent”—“God *sent* forth his Son.” I take great pleasure in that expression, for it

seals the whole work of Jesus. Everything that Christ did was done by commission and authority of His

Father. The great Lord, when He was born at Bethlehem, and assumed our nature, did it under divine

authorization, and when He came and scattered gifts with both His hands among the sons of men He was

the messenger and ambassador of God. He was the Plenipotentiary of the Court of Heaven. At the back

of every word of Christ there is the warrant of the Eternal, at the back of every promise of Christ there is

the oath of God. The Son does nothing of Himself, but the Father works with Him and in Him.

O soul, when you do lean on Christ you do rely upon no amateur Savior, no uncommissioned

Redeemer, but upon One who is sent of the Most High, and therefore is authorized in everything that He

does. The Father says, “This is my beloved Son; hear ye him,” for in hearing Him you are hearing the

Most High. Let us find joy, then, in the coming of our Lord to Bethlehem, because He was sent.

Now run your eyes to the next word, “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth *his Son.”*

*Observe the Divine person who was sent*. God sent not an angel, nor any exalted creature, but “his Son.”

How there can be a Son of God we know not. The eternal filiation of the Son must forever remain one of

those mysteries into which we must not pry. It were something like the sin of the men of Beth-shemesh

if we were to open the ark of God to gaze upon the deep things of God.

It is quite certain that Christ is God, for here He is called “his Son.” He existed before He was born

into this world, for God “sent” His Son. He was already in being or He could not have been “sent.” And

while He is one with the Father, yet He must be distinct from the Father, and have a personality separate

from that of the Father, otherwise it could not be said that God sent His Son. God the Father was not

made of a woman, nor made under the law, but only God the Son, therefore, while we know and are

assured that Christ is one with the Father, yet is His distinctness of personality most clearly to be

observed.

Admire that God should have only one begotten Son, and should have sent Him to uplift us. The

messenger to man must be none other than God’s own Son. What dignity is here! It is the Lord of angels

that is born of Mary, it is He without who was not anything made, who deigns to hang at a woman’s

breast and to be wrapped in swaddling bands. Oh, the dignity of this, and consequently, oh, the

efficiency of it! He that has come to save us is no weak creature like ourselves, he that has taken upon

Himself our nature is no being of limited strength, such as an angel or a seraph might have been, but He

is the Son of the Highest. Glory be to His blessed name! Let us dwell on this with delight.

***“If some prophet had been sent***

***With salvation’s joyful news,***

***Who that heard the blest event***

***Could their warmest love refuse?***

***But ’twas He to whom in heaven***

***Hallelujahs never cease;***

***He, the mighty God, was given—***

***Given to us—a Prince of Peace.***

***None but He who did create us***

***Could redeem from sin and hell;***

***None but He could reinstate us***

***In the rank from which we fell.”***

Press on, still keeping to the very words of the text, for they are very sweet. *God sent His Son in real*

*humanity—*“made of a woman.” The Revised Version properly has it, “born of a woman.” Perhaps you

may get nearer to it if you say, “Made to be born of a woman,” for both ideas are present, the *factum* and

the *natum,* the being made and the being born. Christ was really and truly of the substance of His

mother, as certainly as any other infant that is born into the world is so. God did not create the human

nature of Christ apart, and then transmit it into mortal existence by some special means, but His Son was

made and born of a woman. He is, therefore, of our race, a man like ourselves, and not man of another

stock.

You are to make no mistake about it, He is not only of humanity, but of your humanity, for that

which is born of a woman is brother to us, be it born when it may. Yet there is an omission, I doubt not

intentional, to show how holy was that human nature, for He is born of a woman, not of a man. The

Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin, and “that holy thing” was born of her without the original sin

which pertains to our race by natural descent. Here is a pure humanity though a true humanity, a true

humanity though free from sin.

Born of a woman, He was of few days and full of trouble; born of a woman, He was compassed with

our physical infirmities; but as He was not born of man He was altogether without tendency to evil or

delight therein. I beg you to rejoice in this near approach of Christ to us. Ring out the glad bells, if not in

the spires and steeples, yet within your own hearts, for gladder news did never greet your ear than this;

that He that is the Son of God was also “made of a woman.”

Still further it is added, that God sent His Son *“made under the law,”* or born under the law, for the

word is the same in both cases, and by the same means by which He came to be of a woman He came

under the law. And now admire and wonder! The Son of God has come under the law. He was the Lawmaker and the Law-giver, and He is both the Judge of the law and the Executioner of the law, and yet

He Himself came under the law.

No sooner was He born of a woman than He came under the law, this voluntarily and yet

necessarily. He willed to be a man, and being a man He accepted the position, and stood in the place of

man as subject to the law of the race. When they took Him and circumcised Him according to the law, it

was publicly declared that He was under the law. During the rest of His life you will observe how

reverently He observed the commands of God. Even to the ceremonial law as it was given by Moses He

had scrupulous regard. He despised the traditions and superstitions of men, but for the rule of the

dispensation He had a high respect.

By way of rendering service unto God on our behalf, He came under the moral law. He kept His

Father’s commandments. He obeyed to the full both the first and the second tables, for He loved God

with all His heart, and His neighbor as Himself. “I delight to do thy will, O my God,” says He, “yea, thy

law is within my heart.” He could truly say of the Father, “I do always those things that please him.” Yet

it was a marvelous thing that the King of kings should be under the law, and especially that He should

come under the penalty of the law as well as the service of it. “Being found in fashion as a man, he

humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

As our Surety and Substitute He came under the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Having

taken our place and espoused our nature, though without sin Himself, He came under the rigorous

demands of justice, and in due time He bowed His head to the sentence of death. “He laid down his life

for us.” He died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. In this mystery of His incarnation, in this

wonderful substitution of Himself in the place of sinful men, lies the ground of that wonderful advance

which believers made when Jesus came in the flesh. His advent in human form commenced the era of

spiritual maturity and freedom.

**II.** I ask you now, therefore, in the second place, to CONTEMPLATE THE JOYOUS RESULT

WHICH HAS COME OF OUR LORD’S INCARNATION.

I must return to what I have said before—*this coming of Christ has ended the minority of believers*.

The people of God among the Jews were before Christ came the children of God, but they were mere

babes or little children. They were instructed in the elements of divine knowledge by types, emblems,

shadows, and symbols, when Jesus was come there was an end of that infantile teaching. The shadows

disappear when the substance is revealed, the symbols are not wanted when the person symbolized is

Himself present.

What a difference between the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ when He shows them plainly of the

Father and the teaching of the priests when they taught by scarlet wool and hyssop and blood! How

different the teaching of the Holy Ghost by the apostles of our Lord, and the instruction by meats and

drinks and holy days. The old economy is dim with smoke, concealed with curtains, guarded from too

familiar an approach, but now we come boldly to the throne, and all with unveiled face behold as in a

glass the glory of God. The Christ has come, and now the Kindergarten school is quitted for the college

of the Spirit, by whom we are taught of the Lord to know even as we are known. The hard governorship

of the law is over.

Among the Greeks, boys and youths were thought to need a cruel discipline, while they went to

school they were treated very roughly by their pedagogues and tutors. It was supposed that a boy could

only imbibe instruction through his skin, and that the tree of knowledge was originally a birch, and

therefore there was no sparing the rod, and no mitigation of self-denials and hardships. This fitly

pictures the work of the law upon those early believers. Peter speaks of it as a yoke, which neither they

nor their fathers were able to bear (Acts 15:10).

The law was given amid thunder and flaming fire, and it was more fitted to inspire a wholesome

dread than a loving confidence. Those sweeter truths, which are our daily consolation, were hardly

known, or but seldom spoken. Prophets did speak of Christ, but they were more frequently employed in

pouring out lamentations and denunciations against children that were corrupters.

I think one day with Christ was worth a half century with Moses. When Jesus came, believers began

to hear of the Father and His love, of His abounding grace, and the kingdom which He had prepared for

them. Then the doctrines of eternal love, and redeeming grace, and covenant faithfulness were unveiled,

and they heard of the tenderness of the Elder Brother, the grace of the great Father, and the indwelling of

the ever-blessed Spirit. It was as if they had risen from servitude to freedom, from infancy to manhood.

Blessed were they who in their day shared the privilege of the old economy, for it was wonderful light as

compared with heathen darkness, yet, for all that, compared with the noontide that Christ brought, it was

mere candlelight.

The ceremonial law held a man in stern bondage, you must not eat this, and you must not go there,

and you must not wear this, and you must not gather that. Everywhere you were under restraint, and

walked between hedges of thorns. The Israelite was reminded of sin at every turn, and warned of his

perpetual tendency to fall into one transgression or another. It was quite right that it should be so, for it

is good for a man that, while he is yet a youth, he should bear the yoke and learn obedience, yet it must

have been irksome.

When Jesus came what a joyful difference was made. It seemed like a dream of joy, too good to be

true. Peter could not at first believe in it, and needed a vision to make him sure that it was even so.

When he saw that great sheet let down, full of all manner of living creatures and four-footed things, and

was bidden to kill and eat, he said, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or

unclean.” He was startled indeed when the Lord said, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou

common.”

That first order of things “stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal

ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation,” but Paul says, “I know, and am persuaded

by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.” Prohibition upon mere ceremonial points, and

commands upon carnal matters are now abolished, and great is our liberty, we shall be foolish indeed if

we suffer ourselves to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. Our minority was ended when the

Lord, who had aforetime spoken to us by His prophets, at last sent His Son to lead us up to the highest

form of spiritual manhood.

Christ came, we are told next, *to redeem those who are under the law,* that is to say, the birth of

Jesus, and His coming under the law, and His fulfilling the law, has set all believers free from it as a

yoke of bondage. None of us wish to be free from the law as a rule of life, we delight in the commands

of God, which are holy, and just, and good. We wish that we could keep every precept of the law,

without a single omission or transgression. Our earnest desire is for perfect holiness, but we do not look

in that direction for our justification before God. If we be asked today, are we hoping to be saved by

ceremonies? we answer, “God forbid.”

Some seem to fancy that baptism and the Lord’s Supper have taken the place of circumcision and the

Passover, and that while Jews were saved by one form of ceremony we are to be saved by another. Let

us never give place to this idea, no, not for an hour. God’s people are saved, not by outward rites, nor

forms, nor priestcraft, but because “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,” and

He has so kept the law that by faith His righteousness covers all believers, and we are not condemned by

the law.

As to the moral law, which is the standard of equity for all time, it is no way of salvation for us.

Once we were under it, and strove to keep it in order to earn the divine favor, but we have now no such

motive. The word was, “This do and thou shalt live,” and we therefore strove like slaves to escape the

lash, and earn our wage, but it is so no longer. Then we strove to do the Lord’s will that He might love

us, and that we might be rewarded for what we did, but we have no design of purchasing that favor now,

since we freely and securely enjoy it on a very different ground. God loves us out of pure grace, and He

has freely forgiven us our iniquities, and this out of gratuitous goodness.

We are already saved, and that not by works of righteousness which we have done, or by holy acts

which we hope to perform, but wholly of free grace. If it be of grace it is no more of works, and that it is

all of grace from first to last is our joy and glory. The righteousness that covers us was wrought out by

Him that was born of a woman, and the merit by which we enter heaven is the merit, not of our own

hands or hearts, but of Him that loved us, and gave Himself for us. Thus are we redeemed from the law

by our Lord being made under the law, and we become sons and no more servants, because the great

Son of God became a servant in our stead.

“What!” says one, “then do you not seek to do good works?” Indeed we do. We talked of them

before, but we actually perform them now. Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under

law, but under grace. By God’s grace we desire to abound in works of holiness, and the more we can

serve our God the happier we are. But this is not to save ourselves, for we are already saved.

O sons of Hagar, you cannot understand the freedom of the true heir, the child born according to

promise! You that are in bondage, and feel the force of legal motives, you cannot understand how we

should serve our Father who is in heaven with all our heart and all our soul, not for what we get by it,

but because He has loved us, and saved us, irrespective of our works. Yet it is even so, we would abound

in holiness to His honor, and praise, and glory, because the love of Christ constrains us. What a privilege

it is to cease from the spirit of bondage by being redeemed from the law! Let us praise our Redeemer

with all our hearts.

We are redeemed from the law in its operation upon our mind, it breeds no fear within us now. I

have heard children of God say sometimes, “Well, but don’t you think if we fall into sin we shall cease

to be in God’s love, and so shall perish?” This is to cast a slur upon the unchangeable love of God. I see

that you make a mistake, and think a child is a servant. Now, if you have a servant, and he misbehaves

himself, you say, “I give you notice to quit. Here is your wage, you must find another master.” Can you

do that to your son? Can you do that to your daughter? “I never thought of such a thing,” say you. Your

child is yours for life. Your boy behaved very badly to you, why did you not give him his wages and fire

him? You answer, that he does not serve you for wages, and that he is your son, and cannot be

otherwise. Just so. Then always know the difference between a servant and a son, and the difference

between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

I know how a base heart can make mischief out of this, but I cannot help it, the truth is the truth.

Will a child rebel because he will always be a child? Far from it, it is this which makes him feel love in

return. The true child of God is kept from sin by other and better forces than a slavish fear of being

turned out of doors by his Father. If you are under the covenant of works, then, mind you, if you do not

fulfill all righteousness you will perish, if you are under that covenant, unless you are perfect you are

lost, one sin will destroy you, one sinful thought will ruin you. If you have not been perfect in your

obedience, you must take your wages and be gone. If God deals with you according to your works, there

will be nothing for you but, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son.” But if you are God’s child, that is a

different matter, you will still be His child even when He corrects you for your disobedience.

“Ah,” says one, “then I may live as I like.” Listen! If you are God’s child, I will tell you how you

will like to live. You will desire to live in perfect obedience to your Father, and it will be your

passionate longing from day to day to be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. The

nature of sons which grace implants is a law unto itself, the Lord puts His fear into the hearts of the

regenerate so that they do not depart from Him.

Being born again and introduced into the family of God, you will render to the Lord an obedience

which you would not have thought of rendering to Him if you had only been compelled by the idea of

law and penalty. Love is a master force, and he that feels its power will hate all evil. The more salvation

is seen to be all of grace, the deeper and more mighty is our love, and the more does it work towards that

which is pure and holy. Do not quote Moses for motives of Christian obedience. Do not say, “The Lord

will cast me away unless I do this and that.” Such talk is of the bondwoman and her son, but it is very

unseemly in the mouth of a true-born heir of heaven. Get it out of your mouth.

If you are a son you disgrace your Father when you think that He will repudiate His own, you forget

your spiritual heirship and liberty when you dread a change in JEHOVAH’S love. It is all very well for a

mere babe to talk in that ignorant fashion, and I don’t wonder that many professors know no better, for

many ministers are only half-evangelical, but you that have become men in Christ, and know that He has

redeemed you from the law, ought not to go back to such bondage. “God sent forth his Son, made of a

woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.”

What else has He come for? Notice further, *“That we might receive the adoption of sons.”* The Lord

Jesus Christ has come in human flesh that His people might to the full realize, grasp, and enjoy, “the

adoption of sons.” I want you this morning to see if you can do that. May the Holy Spirit enable you.

What is it to receive the adoption of sons? Why, to feel, “Now I am under the mastery of love, as a dear

child, who is both loved and loving. I go in and out of my Father’s house not as a casual servant, called

in by the day or the week, but as a child at home. I am not looking for hire as a servant, for I am ever

with my Father, and all that He has is mine. My God is my Father, and His countenance makes me glad.

I am not afraid of Him, but I delight in Him, for nothing can separate me from Him. I feel a perfect love

that casts out fear, and I delight myself in Him.” Try now and enter into that spirit this morning. That is

why Christ has come in the flesh—on purpose that you, His people, may be to the full the adopted

children of the Lord, acting out and enjoying all the privileges which sonship secures to you.

And then, next, exercise your heirship. One who is a son, and knows he is an heir of all his father’s

estates, does not pine in poverty, nor act like a beggar. He looks upon everything as his own, he regards

his father’s wealth as making him rich. He does not feel that he is stealing if he takes what his father has

made to be his own, but he makes free with it.

I wish believers would make free with the promises and blessings of their God. Help yourselves, for

no good thing will the Lord withhold from you. All things are yours, you only need to use the hand of

faith. Ask what you will. If you appropriate a promise it will not be pilfering, you may take it boldly and

say, “This is mine.” Your adoption brings with it large rights, be not slow to use them. “If children, then

heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” Among men, sons are only heirs, heirs in possession,

when the father is dead, but our Father in heaven lives, and yet we have full heirship in Him. The Lord

Jesus Christ was made of a woman on purpose that His dear people might at once enter into their

heirship.

You ought to feel a sweet joy in the perpetual relationship which is now established between you

and God, for Jesus is still your brother. You have been adopted, and God has never cancelled adoption

yet. There is such a thing as regeneration, but there is not such a thing as the life then received dying out.

If you are born unto God you are born unto God. The stars may turn to coals, and the sun and moon may

become clots of blood, but he that is born of God has a life within him which can never end, he is God’s

child, and God’s child he shall be. Therefore let him walk at large like a child, an heir, a prince of the

blood royal, who bears a relationship to the Lord which neither time nor eternity can ever destroy. This

is why Jesus was made of a woman and made under the law, that He might give us to enjoy the fullness

of the privilege of adopted sons.

Follow me a minute a little further. The next thing that Christ has brought us by being made of a

woman is, “Because ye are sons, God *hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.”* Here are

two sendings. God sent His Son, and now He sends His Spirit. Because Christ has been sent, therefore

the Spirit is sent, and now you shall know the Holy Ghost’s indwelling because of Christ’s incarnation.

The Spirit of light, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of liberty, the same Spirit that was in

Christ Jesus is in you. That same Spirit which descended upon Jesus in the waters of baptism has also

descended upon you. You, O child of God, have the Spirit of God as your present guide and Comforter,

and He shall be with you forever. The life of Christ is your life, and the Spirit of Christ is your Spirit,

wherefore, this day be exceeding glad, for you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but

you have received the Spirit of adoption.

There we finish, for Jesus has come *to give us the cry* as well as the spirit of adoption, “whereby we

cry, Abba, Father.” According to ancient traditions no slave might say, “Abba, Father,” and according to

the truth as it is in Jesus none but a man who is really a child of God, and has received the adoption, can

truly say, “Abba, Father.” This day my heart desires for every one of you, my brethren, that because

Christ has been born into the world you may at once come of age, and may at this hour confidently say,

“Abba, Father.”

The great God, the Maker of heaven and earth, is my Father, and I dare avow it without fear that He

will disown the kindred. The Thunderer, the ruler of the stormy sea, is my Father, and notwithstanding

the terror of His power I draw near to Him in love. He who is the Destroyer, who says, “Return, ye

children of men,” is my Father, and I am not alarmed at the thought that He will call me to Himself in

due time. My God, You who shall call the multitudes of the slain from their graves to live, I look

forward with joy to the hour when You shall call and I shall answer You. Do what You will with me,

You are my Father. Smile on me, I will smile back and say, “My Father.” Chasten me, and as I weep I

will cry, “My Father.” This shall make everything work good to me, be it never so hard to bear. If You

are my Father all is well to all eternity. Bitterness is sweet, and death itself is life, since You are my

Father.

Oh, trip you merrily home, you children of the living God, saying each one within himself, “I have

it, I have it. I have that which cherubim before the throne have never gained, I have a relationship with

God of the nearest and the dearest kind, and my spirit for her music has this word, ‘Abba, Father, Abba,

Father.’”

Now, dear children of God, if any of you are in bondage under the law, why do you remain so? Let

the redeemed go free. Are you fond of wearing chains? Are you like Chinese women that delight to wear

little shoes which crush their feet? Do you delight in slavery? Do you wish to be captives? You are not

under the law, but under grace, will you allow your unbelief to put you under the law? You are not a

slave. Why tremble like a slave? You are a child, you are a son, you are an heir, live up to your

privileges. Oh, you banished seed, be glad! You are adopted into the household of God, then be not as a

stranger. I hear Ishmael laughing at you, let him laugh. Tell your Father of him, and He will soon say,

“Cast out this bondwoman and her son.” Free grace is not to be mocked by human merit, neither are we

to be made sad by the forebodings of the legal spirit. Our soul rejoices, and like Isaac, is filled with holy

laughter, for the Lord Jesus has done great things for us whereof we are glad. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.