



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 4:1-7

"The Greatest Commission"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our Scripture reading is Galatians chapter 4, verse 1 through verse 7; Galatians chapter 4, verse 1 through verse 7. The apostle has in the immediately preceding verse mentioned the term heirs. He has said, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And now, picking up that word and using a human illustration, he draws out some spiritual points that pertain to the deliverance of the believer from the Law in the present age.

"Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 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, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

In the original text, the terms are through God. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word of God, and the study of it in the hours of this day. We thank Thee for Believers Chapel and for its ministry through the years. We give Thee thanks Lord for the blessings that Thou hast poured out upon each of us, and particularly upon all of our members who have faithfully attended and supported the work of the Lord Jesus Christ here. We are grateful Lord and we are thankful. And we are thankful for this Lord's Day, and we pray that it may be a day in which our own relationship to Thee is strengthened and deepened. And as a result we may be more effective believers in the society in which Thou hast placed us.

We are grateful and thankful for the word of God, and for its ministry to us. We thank Thee for the preservation of it through the years, for the inspirations of the Holy Spirit who guided the authors of the text of Scripture. We praise Thee, we give Thee thanks, we worship Thy name, the triune God on this the Lord's day. We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ, and all of the meeting of this day throughout, not only this land, but the lands of this globe. May Christ be lifted up and honored and glorified. And we pray, too, as has already been prayed, that the church of Jesus Christ, may be strengthened and edified and enlarged if it should please Thee.

We pray for our elders and for our deacons and for those who carry on the ministry here, the staff, the teachers. And especially, Lord, may Thy blessing especially rest on the ministry that goes forth from the Chapel, by radio, by the printed page, through the Bible classes. May we, Lord, experience the blessing of our great triune God, and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for this country, of which we are a part, we pray for it, and for those who carry on its work. We commit them to Thee. And Lord, we would pray especially for any in our audience who are visiting, we ask Thy

blessing upon them. And if by chance there should be someone here who does not have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, may by the ministry of the word of God, they come to rest themselves, by Thy grace, upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for this morning is "The Greatest Commission." "The atonement as a completed work of Christ," John Murray has sensibly said, "must always be viewed in the light of the inter-Trinitarian economy of salvation." Let me repeat that, "The atonement as a completed work of Christ, must always be viewed in the light of the inter-Trinitarian economy of salvation." Or, if we are to understand the atonement, the heart of Christianity, then we must understand the distinctive functions of the three persons of the Godhead and also how they work in beautiful harmony. We are the people of God if we have, by the grace of God, been brought to faith in Jesus Christ who offered the atoning sacrifice for our sins. We are then the product of the invincible, electing love of the Father. He is not simply the just God, and Jesus Christ the merciful God, but the Father is a just and merciful God. And we are the products of his electing love. We are also the products of the obedient, atoning death of our Lord Jesus. The Scriptures that when he had, by himself, purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. So we are the products of the invincible electing love of the Father, and the obedience atoning death of the Son. We are also products of the regenerating, illuminating, quickening Holy Spirit. The Scriptures say that we are borne of the Spirit.

Now, they also say that we have been born with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. So the Father has chosen us. The Son has redeemed us. The Spirit has regenerated, and quickened, and illuminated us, brought us to faith. The trinity beautifully unites in the creation of the new creation of each one of us. The passage before us Galatians chapter 4, is one of those rare passages that is loaded with reference

to all of these doctrinal truths. I said rare, I don't really think it's rare. The epistles are full of these truths, but this one is especially loaded. We have reference to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. We have reference to his full deity. We have reference to his true humanity. We have reference to redemption. We have reference to the great doctrine of adoption. We have reference to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. These are just some of the truths that are referred to here.

The apostle has been expounding the priority of the Abrahamic covenant in comparison with the Mosaic covenant. He's been saying that the promises that God made to Abraham were made unconditionally. Abraham was blessed out of the grace of God. And God took upon himself the full responsibility of fulfilling those gracious promises. He brought in the Law, but the Law came in afterwards, and the legal covenant, a conditional covenant the apostle says, cannot annul those gracious promises that God made to Abraham. We stand as children of Abraham, not children of Moses. We are not Moses' seed. We are Abraham's seed. Well, naturally that raised the question, why did God bring the Law? The children of Israel had thought after a period of time that the Law was the means of their salvation. The law, however, Paul says, was given to reveal the sinfulness of our sin, and the degree of the sinfulness of our sin is reflected in the fact that Israel so twisted the significance of the Law which was never designed to save, but to reveal our sin, and to make it a means of salvation. And so, Paul has had to correct that. He has said that the Scripture has concluded all of the sin, by virtue of the Law.

One of the preachers in entitling a message on verse 22 of chapter 3, where Paul writes, "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin," as given as the title of his message, "The Great Jail and How to Get Out of It." The Law was a jailer. The Law is that which has demonstrated our sin, and therefore our guilt and condemnation. And furthermore, the apostle says the Law was like a slave guardian. And the slave guardian was the one who guided and directed a child, and the child during that period of time was no better than a slave. It was a stern pedagogue. And the apostle has concluded the

3rd chapter by saying, "if we be Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, not Moses' sees; and we are heirs according to the promise." Not according to the merits of good works.

Now a Jewish man, listening to the apostle and knowing something about the teaching of the Bible might well at this point have said to Paul, "But Paul, the Galatians, I admit, are heirs. But were not the Old Testament believers also heirs? And they had the Law. So Paul, why is it so necessary, since we are heirs, that we not be under Law? So Paul, in seeking to answer this kind of question gives a fuller exposition of the alteration of the ages that took place when the Lord Jesus Christ came. His principle point is that since our Lord has come, the age of slavery is over. It has been succeeded by an age of sonship. The Galatians have been confused by the Judaisers. They were in something of the situation similar to the airline passengers who heard their pilot announce, "Our navigator has lost his position, and we've been flying around rather aimlessly for over an hour. That's the bad news. But the good news is that we're making very good time."
[Laughter]

The Galatians in their confused state had been unable to put together the relationship between salvation by grace through faith, and the fact that for years they had been under Law. So the apostle now will seek to clarify that. And as I guess a good minister of the word of God, he begins with a human illustration. He says, "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." So he asks his readers to imagine a very wealthy man who has an heir who is a son. And this son is under slave guardians, or is under tutors and governors. And though he is the heir of a vast estate, he's no different from a servant as long as he's in his immaturity, because the tutors and governors tell him exactly what to do. They tell him when to get up in the morning. They tell him what time to get up in the morning. They tell him what to wear. They tell what to eat. They are with him every moment of the day. And the person is no better than a slave, even though he is heir of all, even though

he is Lord of all Paul says. However, there does a come of the father, a time appointed but the father, the set time of the father, and then things change.

Incidentally, the apostle speaks about this heir, as long as he is a child, and the word that is used for a child, a very common word in the New Testament is derived from a couple of Greek words that mean simply, "one that does not speak." When I was growing up it was very common for parents to say, "Children should be seen, but not heard." [Laughter] It has been a long time you can see. Children should be seen and not heard. Well, this little word for a child, one who does not speak, is a good description of what a child should be.

There is one other thing I want you to notice in Paul's illustration before we move to the application of it. Now, Paul is illustrating the blessings that we have as children. It is very striking to me that he uses the illustration of a man who has a very wealthy estate. He speaks about him, though he is a child, he is nevertheless lord of all, even though he does not have the right to enjoy it. But lord of all suggests a vast estate, and I think the illustration is designed to represent Paul's evaluation of the Abrahamic promises, because the Abrahamic promises are a vast spiritual estate for those who possess them through faith in Christ. So the illustration itself suggests to us that Paul thinks that to be an heir of Abraham and to share in those promises means we are extremely wealthy. Well, some of the things that he has spoken about in the 3rd chapter have been that we have life through those promises. We have justification, we stand before God righteous, with a righteousness that is acceptable to God. He also speaks about the gift of the Holy Spirit, his permanent indwelling presence. These are things that flow out of the Abrahamic covenant, the apostle states. So he is talking about a vast inheritance that all believers in Jesus Christ enjoy.

But the apostle, like a good teacher, now turns to the application of his illustration. And you look at those three words which begin verse 3, and you see the beginning of his application. "Even so we," when Christ came, the switches were thrown

over. The old age passed away. The new age has begun with his death upon the cross, when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world."

New Testament scholars have debated the significance of that word "elements." And there is no general consensus of meaning even at the present time. The word that is rendered elements in the Authorized Version is a word that refers to, originally, things that were placed in a row, in a line; and then as a result of that fundamental meaning. It came to refer to the ABC's of a language, the alphabet. And so the elements referred to the alphabet. What he apparently has reference to, if the elements of the world include the Gentiles as well as the Jews, he's saying that when we were children we were in bondage to all of their human, basic principles by which men sought to justify themselves. In the case of Israel it was the misinformed use of the Ten Commandments as a means of salvation. For Gentiles, well it was their systems, their various systems of seeking righteousness by the things that they do. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world," he says. We were under the ABC's. So when a person steps back from the age of grace into the age of Law and seeks to come under the Law and claim that he must be circumcised in order to be saved, it's a step back into your adolescence.

But having said that, he comes in the 4th verse to the main, the primary, the principle spiritual application as a result of his analysis of the change of the program of the ages; he says, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." Isn't it interesting that in the New Testament the Lord Jesus calls himself the Alpha and the Omega? Paul then could, in effect, say, "We were under the ABC's but now we're related to Alpha and the Omega." Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet; Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. When our Lord says that he is the Alpha and the Omega, it was the same thing that was said concerning Yahweh or Jehovah in the Old

Testament, when the prophets said that he was the first and the last, the beginning and the end. That includes everything.

If you were to go to the giant Library of Congress in Washington and seek to go through what they have in their files, you would discover that everything is contained from A to Z. Everything in that library is comprehended under one of those letters of the alphabet. You can begin at A and you can conclude at Z, and you have everything in the library. When our Lord says that he is the Alpha and the Omega, he is saying, in effect, that everything ultimately is related to me. All truth is God's truth, and all truth is ultimately related to our Lord Jesus Christ. So, Paul might have said, "We were under the ABC's of the Mosaic covenant, but now you're related to him who is the Alpha and the Omega, and in having him, you have everything.

"When the fullness of the time was come"; New Testament students have noticed that in the time that our Lord came, there was a remarkable evidence of preparation for his coming. The world was prepared politically, because Rome had united in the east and the west. Government was on a universal scale such as it had never been before. The famous *pax Romana*, or the Roman peace, characterized the Eastern world and made it possible for the gospel to go forth with freedom that never would have been possible in other times. I think that that's one reason the apostle speaks about the gospel being preached to every creature under heaven. As a result of the political preparation that took place with the coming of Rome. Economically the world was prepared. A wonderful transportation system has been constructed by the Roman. Five main highways led from Rome to the different points of the ancient world. The Romans went every where building roads and taking baths. Even today when you visit in Europe you either travel on old Roman roads, or you see where they took baths. They were certainly road builders, and they must have been quite clean, because they built baths everywhere.

The world was prepared linguistically, because Greek, as a result of Alexander's conquests, had become the lingua franca of the ancient world. It was the lingua franca

commerce, culture, and philosophy. And there is no language that we have ever known that is so beautifully adapted to the expression of the exactness and nicety of expression found in the doctrines of the New Testament. And so the popularity of the Greek language itself was part of the preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. And our New Testament, the capstone of the divine revelation, which gives us the finer message of God concerning life and salvation, is written in the Greek language.

And the world was prepared spiritually, too. Judaism was bankrupt, paganism had always been bankrupt. Rome, which gave men universal empire, could not give them universal salvation. There is evidence that there were Messianic hoaxes that were expressed in the ancient world. In fact, in some places, it is said that Messianic hoaxes were rampant. Many people were thinking about the coming of the Messiah. Even Plato had written about the fact that the savior who came would have to start with a clean canvas, and the first thing that he would have to do would be to take all the children out of the homes in which they were, because of the corruption of the homes of Plato's day, hundreds of years before Christ. So everything was prepared for the coming of the Messianic king, our Lord Jesus Christ, "In the fullness of the times."

Now, I think all of that is true, but it seems to me that in the light of this passage, the thing the apostle is stressing is not the preparation of the world from the human side, but the preparation of the world from the divine side. Did you notice in his illustration in verse 2 he says, that this child "is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." In other words, the person who was guiding and directing all of the affairs of men so that there was a beautiful preparation was the Father. It is an evidence of his sovereignty. If the Lord Jesus had come one hundred years before he came, then Rome would not have been in control of Palestine. And Rome, in the crucifixion of our Lord, would not have been condemned as they are condemned through the events that transpired when our Lord did come. If our Lord Jesus had come one hundred years later than he came, Israel should have no longer had control of their land, Jerusalem would

have been destroyed. And therefore, the nation could not have been charged with our Lord's guilt, as they were. So at the precise moment in history determined by the Father, he came to the ancient land. And there Rome and Israel met, and the Gentiles and the Jews meet in the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior. And thus, not only is Israel guilty, not only are the Gentiles guilty, but both are guilty of the blood of Christ. It was the "fullness of time." It was no accident that he came then. It was the divine appointment that the Lord Jesus should appear then.

Well, he says that at the precise time in history determined by the Father, "God sent forth his Son." When we think of commissions, we think of the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28. But I believe that it is fair to say that this is the greatest commission of them all. "God sent forth his Son." Now, when you study the Bible, it is important that you study all of the words. Pay attention to each word. "God sent forth his Son." It does not say he sent forth his child. He sent forth his Son. The fact that he is called Son is not an accident. Even in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah when we read, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," there is significance. Our Lord was born as a child, in his human nature he was born as a child. But so far as his divine Sonship is concerned, he was not born, except we speak of eternal generation. He was given as a Son.

Now, when we read here, "God sent forth his Son," it is evident that that word "Son" when taken in conjunction with the word "sent" is designed to represent something significant. What Paul meant when he said, "God sent forth his Son," is that the Lord Jesus, when he appeared, appeared not as a person who had come into existence at that time, but as a person who had been in existence long before that time. The very juxtaposition of the word "sent" with the words that follow "born" shows that the birth is not the beginning of the Lord's being. "God sent forth his Son," he already existed, but he comes forth of the Father in fulfillment of the divine commission.

It has always interested me to ponder the ways in which our Lord's incarnation is described. Now, the Bible says that God sent the Son. The Bible says that God gave the Son. The Lord Jesus says, "I came forth from my Father." No human being speaks that way. I don't say to you, "I came forth on September 13, at such and such a time. You all know what it is, I've told you enough times. [Laughter] But I don't say, "I came forth then." I say, "I was born then." And I have said this before here several time, the Lord Jesus only once in the New Testament said that he was born. And the time that he said that he was born, he said it to a Roman prater, procurator, Pontius Pilate. That was the only time, and almost as if he felt that it was insufficient to say, "I was born," he immediately add, "For this purpose came I into the world." So the very time, the only time that he says that he was born, he also says that he came. Because it is fitting when we speak of our Lord, it is fitting to speak of him as the eternal Son who came, having been in existence long before the time that he found himself in the manger in Bethlehem.

Now, there are people who might say, "Well, what's the point of all of this? Is this just a theological lecture?" Well, let me say to you, that this is probably the most significant kind of truth for your own spiritual life that you can possibly find. When we say that these are theological things, we are talking about things that are extremely important. This is not simply some kind of theology. This is not a mere mysterious dogma without bearing on our daily needs. If the Lord Jesus were not really the eternal Son, if he was not really the Son of God from eternity, possessed of the same essence of deity that the Father possess, how could we know that we have any message from God at all? No man can ultimately speak for God. Ultimately, only God can speak for himself, and the only way in which we know that we have a message from God is that God came in our Lord Jesus Christ and spoke to us. So it is essential that our Lord be fully deity, otherwise we have no message from God.

Furthermore, if he is not Son in the unique sense, then we do not have any efficacious atonement, because our atonement must be an atonement accomplished by

one who is possessed of a true humanity and also a full deity. He must be one of us, but he also must have, by virtue of the infinite value of his own personality, he must have accomplished an atonement that is sufficient to cover the sins of sinner. And therefore, he must not only be man, but he must God. He must be the eternal Son. Otherwise, all we have is a maimed Christ. So when we talk about the necessity of the eternal Sonship of our Lord or his deity, we are talking about something that is fundamental to our life forevermore. "God sent forth his Son."

Now, he says that he was made of a woman. That's his true humanity; for he must have true humanity if he is to represent us. No angel can die for us; it is men who have sinned; and so we must have one who possesses a true humanity, "made of a woman," literally, having come to be of a woman. Now, can you image the Lord Jesus as a little child looking up into Mary's face and saying, "Mama." Now, I must confess, I cannot. But I can imagine him saying, "Mother." [Laughter] That seems a little more appropriate to me. I think that there must have been a little of the dignity of his own person about it. But nevertheless he said, "Mother," because he was of Mary according to the flesh. The son, the eternal Son, sent forth from the Father, but at the same time he came to be of a woman. And that's necessary; otherwise he cannot be our substitute.

The apostle continues, he says, "Made under law," in other words, he perfectly fulfilled all of the Law. You know, in the Old Testament when in the Messianic Psalms as David writes concerning the Messiah to come he says, that "The Messiah said, in the volume of the book it is written of me, lo I come to do Thy will O God." And in the Old Testament it says, "Thy Law is in my heart." The Law which condemned and destroyed everyone else did not condemn and destroy the Lord Jesus. Faithful describes how he met a man, who was coming after him as swift as the wind, and he was trying to get away from him and he said, "But he came with a word and a blow. And he struck me and knocked me to the ground. And I got up, and he struck me and he knocked me to the ground again. And he said he staggered up on his feet again, and he knocked him to the

ground a third time." And he said, "I cried out 'Mercy.'" And he said, "That man said, 'I'm not here to give mercy.'" Or words to that effect, but he said, "At that point there came a man along," and he said, "He made him forbear from striking me." He said, "I didn't know who the man was, but I noticed as he went by that he had nail prints, or marks in his hands." And Christian interpreted for him. He says, "The person you met was Moses and his Law. And the person who came by who caused Moses and the Law to stop beating you was the Lord Jesus Christ who offered atonement."

The Law destroys men, "Thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not." But they are the very things that we do, and even after we come to faith in Christ, there still resides in us the principle of evil. And the things that we want to do, we cannot do. And the things that we do not want to do, these are the very things that we do. So that Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am." There is only one person who was ever able to live under the multitudinous precepts of the Law, it was our Lord Jesus. The Law regulated everything. It regulated the clothes that you wear, those things that you eat, all of your religious experiences, all of your daily experiences in business, every kind of relationship that it is possible for a person to have, from the morning until night was all regulated by the Mosaic Law. It's no wonder that Peter speaks about the "yolk which neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear." It destroyed people who were sensitive to the spiritual side of our lives.

But there came one person along who it never destroyed. He wore the things that he should wear. He ate the things that he should eat. He also did the things that he should. He lived under those precepts so far as they pertained to civil life, to the spiritual life. He carried out all of the commandments concerning the offerings. And even to the last night of the Lord's Supper, or the last Passover, ever little detail was carried out perfectly by our Lord Jesus, so that no fastidious Pharisee or eager angel could have found anything wrong with the observance of that last Passover. And he carried it all out perfectly. Even on the cross, he cared for his mother and committed her to the keeping

of John. He came to be under Law. People recognized that, too. They recognized he was under authority. The Centurion said, "I, too, am under authority."

Now, Paul has told us when he came, he has told us how he has come. God sent him. He has told us who he is, the Son of God. But now he tells us why he came. "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. These are parallel purposes, I take it. That he might redeem them that are under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Now I want you to notice that when he says here that he came "To redeem them that were under the law," we do not have the language of conditionalism. He does not say that he came to render men redeemable. He does not say that he came to render men savable. He says that he came to redeem them that were under the Law. Did he accomplish his purposes? Well, we read in chapter 3, verse 13, and "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law." So from the standpoint of the Epistle to the Galatians, the purpose that he had in coming to redeem them that were under the Law was accomplished. The language states it. He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law. He came to redeem.

Now, the Bible teaches us, I think, that the purposes of God are always accomplished. Therefore we cannot say that the Lord Jesus came in order to render men redeemable. He came to redeem. That's what the language of the Bible is, he came to redeem. He came to secure redemption. Now, there can be no contrary design in the Godhead. It is the Father who elects. It is the Son who redeems. It is the Spirit who regenerates. Now, let us speak in human terms. Let us imagine ourselves in the counsels of eternity with the Trinity. And let us imagine that we are overhearing conversation. And we hear the Father say, "I have elected a group of people. They are elected unto salvation, through the preaching of the gospel, in order that they may share my glory for the ages to come." The Son, however says, "I have determined to die for all men, however." And the Spirit, with the purpose of the Father in mind, and the purpose of the Son in mind says, "I vote for the Father. I apply the redemption. I regenerate. I quicken.

I confirm the elect." How ridiculous! How ridiculous that the Father should work toward one end, and the Spirit toward that same end, and the Son not toward that end.

Now the Bible, I think, presents us a picture of the trinity working in beautiful concert to accomplish a definitive purpose. It is the Father who elects. It is the Son who purposes to die for those elect ones. And it is the Spirit who determines to apply, by his regenerating power and the gift of faith, that redemption which the Father has determined, and the Son has accomplished in the shedding of his precious blood. And so he came, "To redeem them that were under the law," and he has accomplished his redemption. The inter-Trinitarian economy of salvation demands that the persons of the trinity work in harmony with one another.

Now, he says too "that we might receive the adoption of sons." We lived as slaves under the Mosaic Law, but now, under the grace of God, when we are converted, brought into the family, not placed under tutors and governors, but we are bread into the family as sons. We have adult sonship. We have all of the blessings that belong to the person who has been acknowledged as the son of the Father. You know, when you have sonship, you have everything. Adoption is a great doctrine. Sometimes I would like to expand that, because that's one of the great doctrines of the Bible. Wouldn't it be nice to be the son of a very wealthy man? Well, one of these days, we shall all be wealthy, when we get to heaven. But being a son of a wealthy man means that you possess that which your father possesses. And to be a son of God is to possess everything. We possess all of the blessings of the divine family. Father, Son, and Spirit, they belong to the sons.

Now he attests this by sayings, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life a man is the test of the possession of life. We don't determine, from the divine standpoint, that a person belongs to the family of God by some kind of second blessing, by some kind of speaking in tongues, by some kind of experience. The test of the possession of spiritual life is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "Ye that have

not the Spirit of Christ is not of his, And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit," into your hearts. Now we have a right to expect from Christians that the Holy Spirit be manifested. We are not the ultimate judge, of course, but there is to be a manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The elders in Believers Chapel have a right to expect that the person who claims to be a believer in Christ should manifest in their lives the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such a dynamic presence cannot help but have some effect on us.

So because we are sons, the Holy Spirit has been sent forth into our hearts. And he is the author of, and he makes us cry out, "Paul says in Romans 8. He's the author of this filial cry, "Abba, Father." The evidently came from the apostle's acquaintance with our Lord's Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, as he was groveling upon the ground like a worm, he cried out, "Abba, Father. All things are possible from Thee. Let this cup pass from me." It's not startling to us today that he should call God, Abba. If you study the Aramaic word Abba, you will discover that it had roots way back in ancient times, and it originally arose as the lisping sound that a little child makes when it spoke of its father. It originally was the equivalent of our "Papa." As a matter of fact there is a Greek word, "Papa." And it's on that word that the Italian word for the Pope is founded. He is Papa to the Roman Catholics, Abba Papa.

Now, it's true this word became a more general word and came to mean, simply, Father. This is the emphatic form in Aramaic meaning father. But it never lost its associations of intimacy. And so it's the intimate term. And what is striking about it is, that we have no record of anyone in Palestinian Judaism or in the Old Testament ever getting down upon his knees and individually looking up to heaven and calling God, "Abba." It is absolutely unique. It is our Lord Jesus who is responsible for this. It is one of the signs of the uniqueness of the divine revelation that came to him. He got down upon his knees, and the apostles and others who heard were so startled when he said, Papa, that they never got over it. And when he told them that when you pray say, "Our

Father, who art in heaven." They recognized that they had the right to call upon God as their Father, too. Because they are also intimate with him through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and through his presence in the lives of believers. Abba Father, what a beautiful thing it is that we are able to speak in the language of a child. After all, that's the final language isn't it?

Dr. Guthrie, one of the great Scottish preachers, when he was dying said, "Sing me a hymn." Then he said, "Sing me one of the [indistinct] hymns. Sing one of those like "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Abba Father, when a person has come to faith in the Lord Jesus and truly possess life from him, he gets down on his knees, and the thing that truly comes from is the cry, "Father."

Well, Paul concludes by saying, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." The last words of this paragraph in the Greek text are "through God" and the point is very plain, through God, not through the Law. So, it's obvious our blessings come not by keeping the Mosaic commandments. They come through God. What does the legalist fail to see? Why, he's failed to see that the set time has come. Christ has come. The old has been done away with. We are living in a new age. The sons now don't obey as under Law, they obey out of love. They don't obey out of fear. They are rich, they have their inheritance. They're not poor. They have a glorious future, the sons of God.

And all this by virtue of the glorious work of the trinity; they have worked in beautiful concert, the Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit applying the redemptive work to those to whom the Father has determined to love in ages past and throughout all of the ages that are to come. What a beautiful story of salvation we find here, all to the glory of God. That's why the reformers kept saying, "Soli Deo Gloria," glory to God alone. John Murray was right, "The atonement as a completed work of Christ must always be viewed in the light of the inter-Trinitarian economy of salvation."

And because of that we have the assurance of a redemption that really redeems, and we are the possessors of it through faith in Christ.

If you here this morning, and you have never believed in him, we remind you of your sins in the light of the Law of Moses. If you look at the Law of Moses with its "Thou shalt nots," you cannot help but be destroyed with the knowledge that you are guilty before God. Oh if I could only get home to you the tremendous importance of what I am saying to you at this very moment. Because ultimately we shall all stand before this great God of the Bible who sent forth a Son, and seek to give answer to him, every one of us. Every one of you looking up at me right at this moment shall some day stand before him. May God the Holy Spirit bring you to the conviction of your sin, and may he also bring you to the conviction of the sufficiency of the blood of Christ for sinners. And may you flee without any weight at all to the cross where the blood was shed. May you lean upon him for time and for eternity. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, what a blessing it is to be able to call Thee Father. To call Thee Father as our Lord Jesus Christ called Thee Father, and directed us to issue our prayers to Thee in that night. O Father, we pray that through the Holy Spirit conviction of sin and conversion may take place. And those who hear my voice, Oh God, so work in them that through the gospel of the Lord Jesus, they may come to know Thee and through the Holy Spirit call Thee, too, Abba Father. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.