

THE GIFT OF REDEMPTION AND THE GRACE OF ADOPTION

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"But when the fulness 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." Galatians 4:4, 5

There is a striking resemblance, what is called an analogy, between the two dispensations and the different experiences of God's people. I will endeavour to explain my meaning more clearly and distinctly. The old dispensation, that is, the dispensation given by Moses, was to a certain extent a carnal one. Christ had not then appeared, and was therefore foreshadowed by sacrifices, types, rites, and ceremonies, which were to a certain extent, carnal. In consequence, those who were under this Old Testament dispensation partook, in a measure, of its spirit. They breathed a legal spirit because they were under a legal dispensation. And this you will find very much running through the experience of the Old Testament saints. But when, in God's own appointed time, Christ came into the world, He brought in a new dispensation—what is called in Scripture "a new covenant." This new dispensation, or covenant, is entirely of a spiritual nature; there is nothing in it legal, but it is altogether heavenly and divine. If you will read carefully the Epistles to the Hebrews and to the Galatians, you will see how the Apostle treats this subject, and how he shows the distinction between the old dispensation or covenant, with its legal rites and ceremonies, and the new dispensation or covenant, which is of grace and grace alone. In the Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle speaks very particularly of the

distinction between these two dispensations. For instance, in the chapter before us he says, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Gal. 4:3). The Apostle is here speaking of the dispensation; he is not speaking so much of the experience of God's people, though, as I have observed, there is a striking analogy between the two. But he is not speaking strictly of the experience of God's people so much as of the dispensation—the Old Testament dispensation under which the ancient fathers lived. Speaking, therefore, of them, and including himself amongst them—for he was born under that dispensation—he says, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." By "the elements of the world," he means the law; not merely the moral law, but the whole dispensation given at Mount Sinai, including what is commonly called the ceremonial as well as the moral law. This he calls "the elements of the world." It is called elements, or rudiments, because it was, as it were, the primary instruction which God bestowed upon the Church. Just as a child learns the elements or rudiments before it proceeds further, so God saw fit to deal with His people. He put them under an elementary or rudimental dispensation before He introduced His gospel. The Apostle calls that old dispensation the elements of *the world*, because, to a certain extent, there were worldly things connected with it. Thus we find him speaking to the Hebrews, "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and *a worldly sanctuary*," by which he means, not worldly in our usual sense of the term, but a worldly sanctuary as distinct from that spiritual sanctuary which God built and not man. Thus, by "a worldly sanctuary," he intends that ancient tabernacle which the hands of man erected, which the eyes of the world could see, as contra-distinguished from that spiritual sanctuary, the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is at the right hand of God, invisible to the human eye. It is

for these reasons that he calls the Old Testament dispensation, "the elements of the world," and says of those who are under it that they were "in bondage," and because the gospel had not then appeared in all its glorious fulness, and liberty had not been proclaimed to captives through the atonement of Jesus Christ. To this points Isaiah (61:1, 2), which the Lord Himself read in the synagogue at Nazareth, and told the people, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." "The acceptable year of the Lord," was that year when the Lord came into the world, and that year will last until Christ comes a second time without sin unto salvation. Therefore the Apostle, speaking of "the acceptable year" (2 Cor. 6:2), says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The acceptable year, then, extends through the whole dispensation till closed by the appearing a second time of the Son of God. These preliminary observations may cast some light upon the words of our text: "But when the fulness 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."

Three things seem to strike my mind as especially connected with and flowing out of our text.

- I. The sending forth of God's dear Son.
- II. What God's dear Son did when He was thus sent forth.
- III. The effects and blessed fruits that spring out of God's

sending forth His dear Son.

But the first word that will demand some little explanation is the expression which stands upon the very threshold of our subject: "*When the fulness of the time was come.*" What is meant by this expression? "The fulness of the time" seems to signify the full completion and entire accomplishment of *that* time which had been designed in God's own mind from all eternity. *Why* the Lord fixed upon a certain season for Christ to appear, and *why* that season was so late in the world's history, we know not. It is hid in God's eternal mind, and is a part of His infinite and inscrutable wisdom. But *this* we know, that it was just such a season as God saw most suitable for that glorious event to be fulfilled in. It is therefore called, "the fulness of the time"—the time that God designed being then fully accomplished. And indeed, even with our limited views, with our imperfect knowledge of that season, we may see that there were some striking instances of God's wisdom displayed in it. *First*, when Christ came the world was at peace. Almost the only time for many, many years, was there then a general peace throughout the world. *Secondly*, through the providence of God, all nations had been subdued under one yoke; and thus became, more or less, one people. And *thirdly*, in God's providence, one language—the Greek tongue—was then spoken universally. So that, were there no other reasons, these three seem sufficient to show that this was a suitable time for the Son of God to appear, for His gospel to run and be glorified, and His salvation to be made known to the ends of the earth. In this fulness of time, the predictions concerning the Messiah were to be accomplished, and the sacrifices were to be fulfilled in that one sacrifice—the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

When the fulness of the time, then, was come, *God sent forth His Son.* What a clear, what a striking, what an

unanswerable demonstration this is of two grand points! First, of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not the Son the image of the Father? Has not the Son the nature of the Father? So the Lord Jesus Christ is declared in God's Word to be "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." The very expression, then, "*His Son,*" is an unanswerable demonstration of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Could a man be God's Son? could an angel be God's Son? Could the highest seraph or brightest archangel be God's Son? Nothing short of Deity could be the Son of Deity. But it also proves secondly, and to my mind this is a very important point, that the Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is one by nature, and not only by office. "He sent forth His Son." Then He was His Son before He sent Him forth. Is not this plain to a demonstration? Say that an earthly father has a son living with him. He sends this son to execute some commission, or upon some errand. Does his doing that errand, or executing that commission, make him a son? Why, he was a son before, and because he is a son, the father has that confidence in him, and that affection towards him, that he sends him to transact that business, which the father, for various reasons, might be unable or unwilling to do himself. Thus the very expression, "God sent forth His Son," plainly proves that the Lord Jesus Christ is one with the Father and blessed Spirit in the glorious Godhead, and shows also that He is not, as many say, a Son merely by office, but a Son also by nature, "God's only begotten Son," "the Son of the Father in truth and love." If it were not so, we lose all the beauty of this declaration in Scripture, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How this touches every feeling of a father's heart! But if the Lord Jesus Christ be not a Son by nature, and only a Son by office, the force and beauty of that text are destroyed. Say that I consented to be called your son, and you consented to

call yourself my father. Would that make you my father, or would that make me your son? But when that relationship already exists, in itself it is a relationship peculiar and indissoluble, and therefore, in the case of God's dear Son, invested with everything beautiful, blessed and glorious.

But again, God sent forth His Son. Did the Lord Jesus Christ, then, come *unwillingly*? No. What read we in the records of God's inspired Word? "Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). Or, as it is in the psalm whence the Apostle quotes, "Mine ears hast Thou opened" (Ps. 40:6). There seems something very sweet in the expression. Do you recollect what we read in the Old Testament, that if a servant had become attached to his master and his master's house, that when the year of jubilee came, if he still loved his master, and consented for ever to be his servant, his master was to bring him to the door, and bore his ear through with an awl, that was to be a testimony that he should ever be his servant. The Lord Jesus Christ therefore, in allusion to this, said, "Mine ears hast Thou opened," or "digged," as it is in the margin, that is, Thou hast made Me Thy servant for ever. "Behold, My servant, whom I have chosen" (Matt. 12:18). "Behold Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1). And thus He is not only God's Son, but God's Servant, by virtue of a special contract of the eternal covenant ordered in all things and sure. He therefore came willingly because "the law of God was in His heart," though He came to be a servant, to be sold at a servant's price, and to die a servant's death. God therefore sent forth His Son, parted with Him, though He lay in His bosom from all eternity, the Object of His eternal delight.

But the Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul tells us *in what way* this dear Son of God came. Oh, what wondrous depths of eternal wisdom have we here set forth! "*Made of a woman.*"

It was necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ in being made the Surety of His Church and people, should be a partaker of their nature. The Apostle Paul points this out very clearly, where he draws the distinction between angelic and human nature. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). Had it been God's purpose to redeem devils, Christ would have taken an angelic nature. It was not God's purpose so to do. But it was God's purpose to redeem man, fallen man; it therefore was needful for the Lord Jesus Christ to take human nature, that in that nature He might be a Substitute and Surety for man. Thus we read in the second chapter of Hebrews (v. 11), "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," that is, of one nature. The Lord Jesus Christ is "He that sanctifieth" the people by His blood and grace. And "they who are sanctified" are the elect of God. He is, therefore, not ashamed to call them brethren.

Again, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." He is therefore declared to have taken upon Him the seed of Abraham, that is, flesh and blood of Abraham, from whom Mary sprang. But it might be said, "Would not that involve original sin? Was not our nature tainted by the Fall? Had not the sin of Adam entered into it and defiled it? How then could the Lord Jesus Christ take that nature without taking, at the same time, its taint and corruption?" Here we see the wonderful wisdom of God; how He interposed in a supernatural, miraculous way to bring it about that though the Lord Jesus took upon Him the seed of Abraham, He should take it without taint, spot, or defilement. He was made of a woman, it is true, and of a sinful woman; for if He had not been made of a woman, He could not have had the actual flesh and blood of the children. But He was

not made of a man and a woman, as we were made. This mystery we find unveiled in the gospel of Luke. The angel Gabriel comes to the Virgin Mary, and tells her, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus." Mary puts this modest inquiry, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:34, 35). Here is the mystery explained. And what reason we have to bless the Holy Spirit for preserving on record the speech of the angel to the Virgin Mary, showing us the supernatural generation of the Lord Jesus Christ by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost in her womb. Observe the expression, "holy thing." The human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a person. It is a holy *thing*; a spotless human nature, which in the moment of its conception was taken into indissoluble union with the divine nature of the Son of God, so as to make Him Immanuel, God with us. Thus, though He was "made of a woman," there was no taint of sin in Him, for He was holy, harmless, separate from sinners and undefiled, and made higher than the heavens. The lamb that was slain, morning and evening, was to be without blemish, and the Paschal lamb was to be without spot, each prefiguring that the Lamb of God was to be without spot or blemish, taint or defilement. If he were not so, He could not have been a sacrifice for sin. We are defiled, polluted, stained within and without by sin and crime; we cannot therefore appear before God in our own righteousness. But the Lord Jesus came down from heaven to be our Surety and Substitute. If He, then, had had a polluted nature, God could no more accept Him than us, for He cannot look upon sin. Here is a double mystery. If the Lord Jesus Christ had not a perfect human nature, He could not have been accepted as a sacrifice. If He had not partaken

of the flesh and blood of the children, He could not have been a sacrifice for them. So that we have to admire, in a twofold way, the wisdom and mercy of God in providing such a sacrifice. This is the Lamb which God Himself has provided for a burnt-offering, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.

But He was also "*made under the law.*" What depths of wisdom do we also see in that! Where were the children? Where was His beloved Hephzibah? Was she not under the law? Yes. But oh! what a state she was in as being under the law! Cursed and condemned by it; every thought of her heart, word of her lips, action of her hands, under the curse unceasingly and perpetually. But see here the wisdom of God. He *sends* forth His Son. Do we not see the voluntary act of this on the part of God? Did man want it? Did man beg God for it? Did His beloved Hephzibah, cast and condemned as she was, even dream of it? She was too deeply sunk, too awfully fallen, to think of such a remedy as that; she was too deeply buried in the world, too blind and ignorant, too bent upon backsliding, too contented with her lost condition, even to feel her ruined state. But if she had felt her dreadful condition, could she ever have ventured to make such a petition—that God should send His dear Son to die for her? If such a thought could have glanced across her mind, would she have had the presumption to breathe it forth? But moved by a regard to His own eternal glory, and moved by love and pity to the Church so deeply fallen, He sends forth His Son. Made of a woman, He is made under the law, and thus comes into the place and stead of the Church for whom He died. Being made under the law, He falls under the curse of the law, as we read, "He was made a curse for us." By His obedience to the law He worked out a perfect righteousness, and at last closes a life of perfect obedience by dying under its curse. He was under the law from the first moment that

He was conceived till the last moment when He cried, "It is finished!" He was under the law in life. He was under the law in death. There was not a single point or part of His life upon earth when He was not under the law, either doing what the law demanded, or suffering what the law required.

II. This leads us to the second point, which is to show *why* God sent forth His Son into the world; *why* He was made of a woman, and made under the law, viz., *to redeem them that were under the law*. This describes God's family. They, as sinners, are under the law. And oh! what it is to be under the law! Must not the law condemn every one under it? Look at this point, first, naturally. Here is a man who has committed some crime—robbery, murder, or some other evil deed, for which he is amenable to the laws of the land. He is arrested, tried, and found guilty. Is he not "under the law" when the jury re-enter the court, and their foreman pronounces him guilty? Is he not "under the law" when the judge passes sentence? In every court of justice, is not the judge seated upon a high raised tribunal, and is not the prisoner placed at the bar in a lower spot to show that he is under the law, which law issues from the mouth of the judge, who is the interpreter and expounder of the laws of the land? So it is spiritually. If you and I had never come into this world tainted with Adam's sin, if we had never sinned in thought, in word, in action, the law could not touch us. The law against murder cannot touch me if I have murdered no man. But if I were to murder, or rob, the law would lay hold of me immediately. If you have never sinned, you are free from the law; but if you have committed even one sin, and that in heart only, you are under the law, and the law can take you by the throat, and say, "Pay me that thou owest!" It will not do for a murderer to say, "I have only murdered once," or for a robber to say, "I have only robbed once." Hast thou murdered at all? Hast thou robbed at all? If thou hast done it

but once, the law of the country lays hold of thee by the throat. So with the law of God. Have you committed one sin, given one adulterous look, said one wicked word, or done one sinful action—and who has not committed millions of such sins? Then are you cursed by the law, and by it condemned. The law takes you by the throat and says, "Pay me that thou owest! and if thou do not pay me, to hell thou must go, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

The Lord Jesus Christ saw His bride in this pitiable condition, and the bowels of His compassion were moved for her. He therefore came down into this lower world to save her from this curse, and was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law. But what is it to redeem? To redeem signifies to purchase from death or imprisonment. It is always used in this sense in the Old Testament. For instance, every firstborn male was to be "redeemed." How? By a price set upon it. So the firstling of an animal, if unclean, was to be redeemed at a certain price; if clean, was to be sacrificed. So if a house had gone into captivity, in other words, had become mortgaged or sold away from its original possession, it might be redeemed. All these expressions point out that redeem meant purchase out of death or imprisonment. It is summed up in the words of the Apostle, "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). Thus the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem them that were under the law by paying a price for them. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18, 19). By this they were completely redeemed; the captives fully set free, for their price was virtually and actually paid to God. Look at the worth and value of the offering. It was not an offering made by man, but by God-Man. All the dignity, therefore, all the

virtue and validity of the Godhead were stamped upon that redemption act. Thus by His own precious blood the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed them that were under the law.

But this precious redemption can only be experimentally entered into by those who know what it is to have been under the law. Those only can really value such a redemption as this who have been, or are under the law, in bondage through it, condemned by it, and fearing lest its sentence should burst forth on their heads and hurl them to a deserved hell. Others may receive the doctrine, but these only can receive the power of this precious truth as the Lord is pleased to open up the way of salvation through a Saviour's blood, and apply it warm to the heart. Oh! the value of an interest in Christ; for if not redeemed from under the law by the blood and obedience of God's dear Son, under that law they must live, under that law they must die, and by that law they must be eternally cursed.

III. And this leads us to our last point, which was to show some of the *benefits* and *blessings* which spring out of this glorious work of redemption, "*that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"

There was a bar that previously stood in the way. God, so to speak, was willing to receive us as sinners, but there was a barrier in the path to prevent it. I will endeavour to illustrate this by a figure. Suppose that you were childless, and wished to adopt a child to bear your name, and to succeed to your property. Having looked round, at last you fix your eye on a child you think will do for the purpose. Now, nobody can dictate to you what child you intend to adopt. It is an act of perfectly free choice on your part, whether you choose this one or that, and at last you fix on one. But just as you are going to adopt that child into your family by some formal act,

someone says to you, "That child has an incurable disease, he comes from parents tainted with scrofula;" or, "His father and mother are loose, vile characters, and all their children have turned out such thieves and rogues, I would not have you take that child into your family. If you do, you will certainly repent it." "Well," you would say, "until I can find some cure or remedy, I cannot adopt that child." Take this spiritually. Here is the Lord God Almighty looking down from heaven intending to adopt a certain number of men and women to be His children. But there is a bar in the way. The law comes in and says, "No, no. It cannot be. They cannot be adopted. God is holy; they are unholy; God is pure; they are impure. The law demands perfect obedience, and they are breakers of it in every point, and at every moment. Their father Adam was diseased from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, and all his sons and daughters are as diseased as he. They cannot, therefore, be taken into the family of a holy God. The holy angels would be ashamed to have them taken into co-sonship with them; those holy beings who never sinned nor fell would blush to have foul diseased sinners with them in heaven." The bar, then, must be removed. Now see how it is removed. "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.*" Whilst the law stood in the way cursing and condemning, there was no receiving the adoption of sons, because the law forbade it. When Adam was turned out of Eden, if he wished to return he could not, for there was a flaming sword turning every way at the gates of Paradise. So the flaming sword of divine justice would shut a sinner out unless it were sheathed. But how? O wonderful way! It was sheathed in the body of Jesus Christ. That flaming sword which turned every way to guard the tree of life, being sheathed in the heart and bowels of the Redeemer, was removed, so that the way to the tree of life was opened. Yes,

a new and living way was made through the flesh of God's dear Son. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ having redeemed them that were under the law, there was a way laid open for them to receive the adoption of sons. The Lord Jesus Christ having redeemed His people by His own blood, has removed the bar, and opened a channel for the Spirit of God to flow into their souls, and make manifest to them that they are God's adopted sons. Therefore the Apostle adds, "Because ye are sons (that is, adopted into God's family), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." We receive the adoption of sons when God is pleased to send forth His Spirit into the heart, and never fully know it till that spirit of adoption comes, though sons before. I will endeavour to explain this by a figure. When a child is able to say "Father," is that the first time it is a child? "No," say you, "surely not, it is a child long before it can claim that tender relationship." Or take another case, which is more strictly to the point. Suppose that, as I before intimated, you have adopted a child from infancy. It may be a long time before this child can call you father, and even some time before it feels privileged to call you so, though you have adopted it. Still from the moment of adoption, from the time you first took the child into your house, laid it in the cradle, gave it a name, and called it yours, it was your child. But it might be long before it could say father, or know you as such. So spiritually; the moment the Spirit of God quickens a soul into spiritual life, and begins that good work, which He will never leave unfinished, it is a son, because adopted into the family. Therefore the Apostle adds, "*Because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." But it is only when they know and feel they are sons that they can cry "Abba, Father."

It is, then, necessary first to fall under the law; its bondage, condemnation, and sentence bringing the soul in guilty

before God. But when the Lord is pleased to open up some sweet views of Jesus and His glorious gospel, to shed abroad His love in the heart, to reveal Christ to the soul and make Him experimentally known, then His living child receives the adoption of a son, and becomes adopted experimentally into God's ransomed family, the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ.

But whence do all these blessings flow? The Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul puts them on a right foundation. Does the Apostle say, "Because ye have been so virtuous, so pious, so charitable, so obedient, and so excellent in all your conduct, therefore God has given you the adoption of sons"? And yet is not that doctrine openly or tacitly proclaimed from a thousand pulpits? Is not this the usual strain, though sometimes cautiously and delicately wrapped up? If you will be obedient, if you will serve God, if you will be religious, then He will adopt you into His family. But does the Apostle Paul use such language? See on what a different foundation he puts the adoption of children: "When the fulness of time was come." Man could not delay it, man could not hasten it; no man asked Him, no man dared to dream of such a thing. "He sent forth His Son." And what reception did His Son meet with? Was not the sword of Herod drawn against Him almost as soon as He lay in His cradle-manger? Was He not hated and despised through life, and at last did not His blood-thirsty enemies in fulfilling God's Word, nail Him to the accursed tree? As the Lord spoke in the parable, when the lord of the vineyard sent his son, this was the language of the vine-dressers, "This is the heir, let us kill him," and they cast him out of the vineyard, and put him to death. But God, unmoved by human entreaties, and undeterred by human wickedness, for His own name's sake, and the salvation of His Church and people, "sent forth His Son to redeem them

that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Not because we are holy, religious, and pious, but because God hath sent forth His dear Son we receive the adoption. There it all rests. Christ is the fountain whence the streams of grace flow, and from no other source can they or do they ever flow into a sinner's heart. Have you not found it so by experience? What have all your good deeds produced? Did they ever bring you near to God? When the Lord was first pleased to open your eyes, and you began to work hard at the mill for life, did it not rather increase your burden, because you began to find sin was mixed with all you did? But when the Lord was pleased to open your eyes, and show you a precious Saviour at God's right hand, to reveal Him in your heart, and cause His blessed gospel to make sweet music in your ears, when He was pleased to raise up faith in your soul, whereby this blessed Jesus was looked up to, and received into your heart as the very Christ of God, did not this give you some springing of hope and love upward, some spirituality of mind, some heavenly breathings of affection into His bosom, some liberty from the curse of the law, some deliverance from guilt and misery? If ever your soul and mine have been revived out of darkness and bondage, it has been by the opening up of this way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Our own doings, if rested in, only set us farther from God. But the moment we look to Him, and Him alone, there is an opening up of the truth of God to the soul; the new and living way through the flesh of Jesus spangles before the eyes, and the soul finds access to God through the Lord Jesus Christ under the teaching of the blessed Comforter. We shall never have any filial feeling towards Him in any other way, or from any other source.

It is by believing the testimony that God has given of His dear Son, that we truly live and love. "He that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." "And this is the record, that

God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11, 12). By receiving this testimony, or record (the word is the same), we become manifested as children of God. We shall never get any better any other way; we shall only get worse. We shall never be able to overcome sin, and live a life of faith and prayer, except as the Lord is pleased to open up the blessedness of the gospel. All right motives, all right feelings, all right endeavours, all right works, all right words, only proceed from a knowledge of the glorious gospel. The reception of the gospel into our hearts always gives a measure of peace and joy in believing. But, poor dark creatures that we are, we often get so blinded by the smoke of Sinai, and we turn our eyes away from the clear light of the gospel, and so look at Moses' angry face, as to lose sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And dark we ever shall be, whilst we continue within the sound of the thunders and within sight of the flames of that burning mount. But when we can enter experimentally into these words, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest...But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and unto an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:18-24)—then we begin to enter into the gospel feast, and enjoy a measure of peace and joy in believing. O see what an encouragement this is for poor burdened sinners who are condemned by the law! God hath sent His dear 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. Are you under the law? Do you feel to be there? Does the law condemn you? Is sin your plague? Are you trembling at the wrath to come? God hath sent forth His Son to redeem such as you from under the law, that you might receive the adoption of sons. When you are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul, every blessed feeling will be raised up in your heart. The Lord will send forth the Spirit of His Son with power into your soul, enabling you to cry, "Abba, Father!" He will own the divine relationship of His own creating and bestowing, His Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, and you will be sealed an heir with God, a joint-heir with Christ; and all this flowing out of, and to the praise of, that superabounding grace which, as where sin hath abounded, doth much more abound, to the glory of God, and the salvation of His people.