



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 4:1-7

John Bunyan Conference III

TRANSCRIPT

[Introduction of Dr. Johnson] [Audio begins abruptly.] Was a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is one of those very rare people who are seminary professors who can also preach. [Laughter] And he's also even more rare in that he preaches to the mind and to the heart both. He's a very gracious man, a very godly man, and I count it a privilege to be numbered among those who know him. God bless you as you preach to us.

[Johnson Lecture] Well I want to say it's a privilege to be here with you, and I am indebted to John Reisinger. I don't know whether John knows how to pronounce his name or not, but I have friends who call him Risinger, and others who call him Reisinger, and I've known him as Reisinger, and John, if it's Risinger please pardon me pronouncing it the way I have been pronouncing it, and I will wait for you to correct my pronunciation. Not my accent that cannot be corrected but. [Laughter]

I am indebted to John Reisinger, because many years ago when I was wrestling through the question of definite atonement or particular redemption I went over for some meetings in the state of Mississippi, and while I was in the meetings I became sick and had to lie on a bed for about two days, and I had a set of John's tapes and they were

tapes on the five points of Calvinism, and I must say, I say this honestly. It was one of the clearest presentations of the five points of Calvinism that I had read, and it was at the period of time when I was really wondering whether it was wise for me to, in the midst of the institution of which I was a part, to lay much stress on what it appeared to me the Lord was teaching me concerning the doctrine of the atonement, and so, John I thank you for the ministry of the word of God as I was lying on my back, but the doctrines of the grace of God gave me a great deal of comfort in my mind while my body was not feeling very good. We've had the privilege of having John in Texas often, and he and I have been in conference there together in Salado, Texas particularly and I have of course enjoyed those days as well.

The conference that we're in is on the atonement, and I have the feeling that we're going to be saying a lot of the same things that we are saying. Now that was a great message that Fred gave us. He reminded me of a statement that I had in my Bible. I have always been interested in boxing, primarily because I was always afraid to box, but I have kept up with what's happening in the world of boxing, and recently when Mike Tyson defeated Frank Bruno of Great Britain. Bruno made a comment after the fight, which lasted as I remember two rounds, and he said, "Mike came after me like a harbor shark." And I thought really that Fred kind of came at us in the last message like that. It was really a great message. Thank you, Fred. And I really appreciated it. It's obviously delivered from the heart, accurate, true to the word of God.

Now you have to listen to an old man, and furthermore I am going to be saying a lot of the things that have already been said, and I am sure that's characteristic of our conferences, but it will be true, and so if I am saying some of the same things, just pay attention the beautiful articulation of the English language, [Laughter] and you will be able to get through, I am sure, satisfactorily.

I have been asked to speak on the subject of Paul's interpretation of the atonement, John's interpretation of the atonement and then heaven's interpretation of the

atonement. The last of the passages coming from Revelation chapter 5, and so that's what I will try to do, and so if you have your Bible's open there, turn with me to Galatians chapter 4, and I'd like to read the first seven verses of this chapter. I must say that last night I had a little bit of a problem with myself, wondering whether I should speak on the subject of 2 Corinthians 5:20 and 21 or Galatians 4:1 through 7, but this is what I feel that I should do. So will you listen as I read these seven verses that open the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Incidentally, I am reading from the Authorized Version. [Laughter] Thank you. [Laughter] It is however not from conviction that I am reading from the Authorized Version as told the church yesterday the addition I have has a little bigger print, and it's easier for me to see without using my glasses, so essentially that's why I am reading this.

I have always felt that ultimately if you could read the Greek text that should be your text because that is so far as we know what the apostles have written for us, but let's look now at these verses. The apostle writes,

“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 fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, (I am sure that many of you know that that original phrase that the apostle uses is literally “came to be of a woman” translated here,) 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.”

The atonement, John Murray has said, “As a completed work of Christ must always be viewed in the light of the inter Trinitarian economy of salvation.” That’s a great statement, and I have greatly appreciated it because it spoke primarily to some of the problems that I used to have with the doctrine of the atonement. 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 heart of Christianity, the atonement we must understand, so Mr. Murray implied we must understand the distinctive functions of the three persons of the Godhead.

The people of God are the products of the invincible electing love of the Father. We’ve heard about that in the preceding hour, and when we read through the New Testament there are many of the passages of the New Testament that speak to this point. The one that comes to my mind is Ephesians chapter 1 just a few pages over, in which the apostle writes,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ according as he hath chosen as in him before the foundation of the world (Cathos [ph9:00] the Greek adverb there can be rendered because and many do render it that way,) because he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame in with him in love.”

And so we are the products of the invincible electing love of the Father. It’s not simply the just God, but he is the invincible God who elects out of eternal love. We are the products of the obedience of the second person of the trinity. We could call it the obedient atoning love of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

In Hebrews chapter 1 in verse 3, the writer of that great epistle has written these words, “Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person and

upholding all things by the word of his power when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” That’s the only purgatory in the Bible, but it’s a sufficient one for us.

We are the products of this obedient atoning death of the Son, and we are the products of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as the apostle John writes in chapter 3 in verse 8, giving the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. There he says these words, “The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell where whence it cometh and whether it goeth so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” And so we are the products of our great Trinitarian God, the Father who elects, the Son who dies, the Spirit who regenerates and all of these three works unite in the production of what we know as the new creation.

This passage that I’ve read, as you can tell, is loaded with reference to these truths. There is reference to the incarnation. There is reference to the deity of the Son of God. There is reference to his humanity. There is reference to his redemption and many other truths are found in this great passage. What Paul has been talking about essentially, and what he goes on to talk about is the priority of the Abrahamic promises to the Mosaic Law. That’s been his primary theme.

Mr. Spurgeon has a great sermon on verse 22 of chapter 3, which he entitles “The Great Jail and How to Get out of It.” [Laughter] And he has a great sermon on verse 24 called “The Stern Pedagogue,” and he has one also on heir ship. I can image as someone has said, a careful listener might say to Paul, “But Paul the Galatians may be heirs but were not Old Testament believers also heirs?” Well they had the law, Paul so why should we not have the law too?” So what Paul is going to do is to give us in the epistle to the Galatians a fuller exposition of the alteration of the program of the ages that has come with Jesus Christ. Slavery has been followed by son ship. As he says in verse 7, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son and if a son then an heir of God through Christ.”

Now we're not trying to develop anything that has to do with that. We are talking particularly about the atoning work and so we'll have to drop it at that point. The apostle as you can tell in verse 1 and verse 2 uses a very human illustration, the heir as long as he is a child. Incidentally that word for child here is the Greek word *napios*. *Napios* is a term derived from *na* and *epos* or *apos*, and so the child is one who does not speak. He's one who should be seen and not heard we have been told in the ancient past. That's what a *napios* is. He's one who should be seen and not heard, so the idea of children being seen and not heard goes all the way back to the New Testament [Laughter] and the use of *napios*. That argument however I have found not very convincing to kids [Laughter] at the particular in which you would like for them to be a little quiet. So the child is the heir of a vast estate. He's really though Lord of all, a slave in bondage, as long as he is a child. So Paul has been talking about what we were, believers, what believers were before Jesus Christ came.

Well he leaves his illustration, we are not trying to expound these passages in the fullness, but we go on the verse 3 through verse 5, in which the spiritual application is made. “Even so we when we were children were in bondage under the elements of the world.” So, “Even so we” the application, the switch is thrown over so the speak and now the apostle will talk about us who live in this particular age. And the preparation is described in verse 3, “Even so we when we were children were in bondage under the elements of the world.” Under the elementary principles, that's a rather difficult expression in the original text. It's a word that often was used of the A, B, C's. And so it is the elements. The bondage is the bondage to the law, and of course it's misuse. To return is to step back into adolescence, and so the apostle will want to be sure to make the point. He will go on in chapter 5 to say,

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty where with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold I Paul say unto you, that if he be

circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing, but I testify again to everyman that is circumcised that he is debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law ye are fallen from grace.”

So under elementary principles so we were, Paul said before Jesus Christ has come.” But now the Son has come, and so in the fourth verse he writes, “But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law.” “In the fulness of time” a great deal has been written about the this expression “the fulness of time” and some of it is very interesting because it is remarkable how prepared God made the world, prepared the world for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There was political preparation in the sense that Rome had united the ancient world, and the East and West government had become government on a universal scale. The Pox Romana, the famous expression of Roman peace is something that characterized the ancient world in the days of the coming of our Lord. It was a fitting forerunner of the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and so politically there was remarkable preparation. A great deal has been written about this. There is no need for me to try to say anything further about it than that.

There was economic preparation as well. A fine transportation system had been built up in the ancient world. Rome was known for roads and for baths. If you have gone to England, one of the things when you go to Bath, England to see are some of the things that the Romans have left us, and they really were known for building roads and building baths so that they could take baths. And their highways that lead out from Rome were remarkable in the sense that there were five main highways from Rome to different points of the compass so that there was a remarkable preparation economically for the coming of our Lord and particularly for the spread of the gospel, and the ministry of the apostles had the world prepared by the Lord God for them.

Linguistically, Alexander in his conquests had introduced Greek culture and the Greek language, which had become the lingua franca the kind of language that was the language of commerce, and so it became therefore the language of not only commerce, but language of culture, the language of philosophy. And what is so interesting about it to me as a teacher of New Testament Exegesis for many, many years. The language of Greek was so suitable for the writing of the New Testament.

I am sure in my own life I was prepared like the world was prepared for Jesus Christ, and I'll tell you why. I was not converted. I studied the classics. I had eight years of Latin. I was not converted. I took classical Greek three years of classical Greek. I was not converted. When I was finally converted at age twenty-five, I could open up the Greek New Testament and read it immediately. I was a great advantage. I went to seminary and I was two or three years ahead of my class simply because I could read Greek, and knew something about Latin because the structures of the language are very, very similar. But it impressed itself upon me that the fact that Greek had become the lingua franca was a preparation for the New Testament particularly the New Testament because of the great stress of the New Testament on the theology of the truth because there is no better language to express the fine distinctions that are necessary in theological thought than the language of the Greeks. Latin did not have a definite article for example, but Greek has a definite article. Things are definite. The language itself is beautifully prepared for theological study. If you wanted a good argument study theology that would be one it's prepared by the Lord God, the language itself. There was a preparation.

To show you also how important it was that God should do this work for us, if Jesus Christ who came to die for us, had come one hundred years earlier, the Roman state would have had no authority in Judea, and yet we have reason to believe that it was expected that Rome, universal government should have part in the death of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. The world power would have had no part in his condemnation if our

Lord had come one hundred years earlier. If he had come one hundred years later the consenting of the Jewish religious authorities to his death would have been impossible for their temple would have been destroyed and therefore their hand in the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ would not conceivably been possible. The conditions of the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ then would not have been fulfilled as we look at this from the human standpoint were the situation politically and historically not what it was.

“In the fulness of time” the Apostle Paul writes.

It was Phillip Schaff who wrote something I thought was rather interesting. I want to read it to you. This is what the great historian says, “In the fullness of time when the fairest flowers of science and art had withered and the world was on the verge of despair, the virgin son was born to heal the infirmities of mankind. Christ entered a dying world as the author of a new and imperishable life. In the fulness of time God sent forth his son.”

You know there is something about this however that I think we ought to notice. Almost all expositors do what I've done. They've talked about the political preparation, the economic preparation, the linguistic preparation, even the spiritual preparation because Judaism was bankrupt. Paganism had always been bankrupt, and so Rome, which gave men universal empire is obviously an empire that could not give the salvation that can be called universal, that came when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came to provide such a salvation, but our text is rather interesting in that the apostle doesn't really say all of these things that I have said. It appears that we can say that these things may have been involved in the expression “in the fulness of time,” but actually what the apostle says is he relates everything to the Father.

Notice but is under. Well, I'll just read those verses again “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.” In other words it's ultimately the will of God that is the important thing, and it was the will of God. And

we can look at the political preparation, the economic preparation, linguistic preparation, spiritual preparation, and remark about how fitting things were, but ultimately it was because it was the time set by the Father that the Son of God should come, and if we go back passages in the Old Testament, there reason to give further explanation for that.

God sent forth his Son. We all say this. You know this. There are too many preachers in this audience not to have said this many times yourself, that the greatest commission ever given is the commission that the Father gave the Son. God sent forth his Son. This is the great commission. It's not the commission of Matthew chapter 28. This is really the greatest of commissions. That's a great one. This is the greatest. The Son not the child incidentally is sent. It's very interesting because as Fred was saying, the birth of our Lord is not the beginning of his being. It's the Son who is sent forth. In fact this statement, “God sent forth his Son” is an evidence of the deity and eternity of the nature of our Lord himself. “God sent forth his Son.” There are ways in which our Lord expresses it you know. In fact his really favorite expressions are “I was sent” or “I came.”

Now we never use that expression, and we don't use “sent” either do we? Did you know I was sent to you in 1915? Now isn't that the strangest thing if I were to say I was sent in 1915. You'd know there was something strange if I were to say that. We don't say that. We say I was born. I was born in 1915, and incidentally I was born in 1915. [Laughter] I am giving you a truth. I was born in 1915, but I wouldn't say I was sent then. I wouldn't say I came then, but I did come then in the sense I came into this world, but I wouldn't say that. We don't say we were sent. We don't say we came, but our Lord says those words. He says, “I was sent.” He said, “I came.” These are the terms of someone who preexisted, so “I came. I was sent.” “I came” the perfect willingness for omission, but it also is evidence of his preexistence.

Incidentally our Lord did one time say he was born, only one time. He said he was born not surprisingly to Pilot. And you may remember he also said he explained it further, not only said, “I was born.” But he used one of these other expressions. The

other expression is really the truth of the matter, but Pilot wouldn't have understood, and so he said, he was born as well, but he's the only one to whom he said he was born. All through the language of our Lord you can sense who he is if you are just paying attention, if you are just paying attention to the simple words that are used. “I came.” “I was born.” No. “I was sent.”

Now I always remember the individual who said, “If I knew where I was going to die, I'd never go near the place.” [Laughter] And to say things like “I came.” “I came. I was born” is so ridiculous the more you think about it. It's just absolutely ridiculous to say that but our Lord said that.

Now what is important about this? “I came. I was born.” No. “I was sent.” Well we sitting in this audience, I don't know much about this audience, but I know enough about John Reisinger, and I know enough about some of you, and I know enough about the fact that this conference has been held, that the great truths of the word of God are known by you. You know you don't have any problem over the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You don't have any problem with the Trinity that was evident in the preceding message, but what is so important about it is that so much hinges upon the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Think for a moment, if our Lord Jesus Christ is not the eternal God the second person of the Trinity, then we have no sure knowledge of God. We have no sure knowledge of God. We have no God who has come to tell us about God. A prophet, well the prophets were very useful, but it was our Lord who came and confirmed, authenticated the message of the prophets and their message was authenticated by his coming. That's why the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ is so important. Why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important that the truthfulness of the word of God ultimately depends upon the mission, the incarnation of this great Son of God. He's confirmed the Scriptures that prophets and others had given to us previously.

Now the text says, “God sent forth his Son made of a woman.” True humanity can be our substitute, how necessary. Not only the eternal Son, but the eternal Godman. The

eternal god man, made of a woman came to be from a woman. This is not a clear, absolutely clear without argument evidence of the virgin birth, but it's certainly harmonious with it. And certainly strange if he is not virgin born, because it was customary for Hebrew people to relate their children to their Father not to the mother would normally have been, came to be of Joseph, but here came to be of a woman contrary to the customs of the Jewish people. So implicitly the virgin birth is found here, and most of us who are believers in our Lord firmly believe that our Lord was born of a virgin, and made of a woman reminds us of that fact, can be our substitute.

Now Fred has told us a great deal about substitution, but I've just written an article on substitution, so I have to say something about this. “Came to be of a woman,” and then Paul goes on to say, “Came to be under law to redeem them that were under law that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Perhaps I should say just a word about “Came to be under the law.” He's singled out as having come during the period of the applicability of the Mosaic Law to us in the sense in which it was originally given. I don't deny the usefulness and importance of the Mosaic Law to us today. Anyone who reads the apostle's languages, and words know very clearly that the apostles cite the law, cite aspects of the law and cite the law as part of God's holy Scripture, but here it is stated specifically, “He came to be of a woman, he came to be under the law.” That period of time that reached out to the time of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ when the veil of the temple was writ in twain from top to bottom signifying the change of the age that took place at that point. So “Came to be of a woman, came to be under law that he might redeem them that were under the law.”

Now our word “substitution”, what is interesting about this is that he says he came to redeem. He does not say that he came to make men redeemable. He came to redeem. We are talking about a definite transaction. We are talking about an effectual work. [Amen from audience] This is an effectual work that our Lord accomplishes to redeem not to render men savable, not to render them redeemable, but to redeem them.

Now I must say to you Dallas Seminary had one of the greatest curriculums that I have seen in any evangelical institution. When I tell people this, I was talking to Fred this morning about it. It's unbelievable today if you came to Dallas Seminary fifty years ago, the president of the institution did not know Greek, and he heard a lot of people talking about Greek behind a pulpit like this and he decided that his students should have Greek, and so they had Greek. At the seminary you had to have five years of Greek before you could graduate.

Now most of the seminaries today have much less than that and some of them have hardly any at all now. In fact in our theological schools and some of them the only course that is given in the original language is a language to teach you how to read a book, but not to really know Greek or Hebrew or to be very serious about exegetical studies, but all of our men had to have five years of Greek. They had to come in with Greek, and had to study for four more years. If they came in without Greek, they were permitted to enter, but then the second year they had to take two Greek courses. It was a third year. Two Greek courses and catch up. They had to take three years of Hebrew. And so when it came to the study of the Scriptures themselves they at least were prepared to read the original languages too. So one of the things that I had to do is to teach New Testament exegesis, and I must tell you through the years I had to lecture on the Greek text explaining the Greek text exegetically, and at the same time giving the force of the flow of the argument to our men, and I came to all of these texts which said, Christ died in our behalf. Christ died in our stead, Christ died for us, and I had to explain these things. In what sense can it be said that Christ died in our behalf. In what sense can it be said that he died in our place? And so all constantly it was raised the question, “For whom did Christ really die?” And all kinds of explanations I was exposed to through the years, and I am thankful for some of my students who would ask the embarrassing questions.

Professors are so indebted to students who ask embarrassing questions and get you started on something that may bring some ultimate light to the professor. “He came,” we read here, “that he might redeem.” That is a definite work of atonement, to redeem. No conditionalism, no possibility about it. No conditional kind of redemption, but he came specifically to redeem.

Now the question is of course did he accomplish it? Well of course if we turn back to chapter 3 in verse 13, we read, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. For it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” So evidently, the apostle believed that the purpose that he came to accomplish, he did accomplish. That is he came to redeem, and he has redeemed us from the curse of the law having been made a curse for us, so no conditionalism.

Now notice what Paul has said. He has said, “God sent forth his Son who came to be of a woman, came to be under the law to redeem them under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons and because you are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba Father.” So evidently he is talking Trinitarian language isn’t he? “God sent the Son and the Spirit has been sent forth into our hearts.” Evidently taking preeminent place over the law. The Spirit, the Spirit now indwells believers. Ultimately we are responsible through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he’s none of his Paul tells believers, more than once walk by the Spirit.

Now we are not saying anything contrary to the law. I don’t want to get into that. That’s not the point of this message. I just want you to notice that the Spirit does come as a result of what Christ has accomplished, and I don’t have to argue the deity of the Spirit with you, I know. So we have here the Father, who sent the Son the Son who came to accomplish the redeeming work, and the Spirit who has come in harmony with this into our hearts crying Abba Father. Abba, what a wonderful little word that is, Abba, the Aramaic emphatic word for father, Abba. It’s very much like, now I know you are going

to think this is some expositor giving something that's not really true to ancient language, but it's true.

You can study Joachim Jeremias and other scholars, really scholars of Semitics. Abba was the term that was used of a little child referring to his father. It's very much like our papa. Papa, Abba, father. So the Spirit has come and saying, Abba, father. This is the way our Lord prayed, remember, Abba Father. So here we have the three persons of the Trinity cooperating in the work of redemption, Father, sending the Son. The Son doing the redeeming work, the Spirit confirming it by taking possession of the person who has been redeemed. It wasn't long in my study of the New Testament that I learned that Christ died for sinners. It wasn't long for me to learn from the word of God that the Father was one who was prominent in this work of redemption, sending his Son having loved us sufficiently to send the Son, and then as we have been seeing the Holy Spirit cooperating fully.

Now as I began to study the question of the atonement, one of the things that arose in my mind was well if we have the Father doing a work, and if we have a Son doing the work, and we have a Spirit doing the work isn't it sensible to think that they cooperate in this work? [Laughter] Sensible to think that they cooperate. I didn't have any problem with parts of this the Father sending the Son and the Spirit indwelling me, but Jesus Christ coming with the intent to redeem a particular people. But all of my friends, all of my friends were saying, “No, Jesus Christ came with the intent of redeeming all universally.” And so we have the Father doing one work, the Spirit doing the same work, and the Son doing a different work.

Now let me ask you a simple question. Does not that mean that there is some kind of difference within the Trinity itself? The Father determined to redeem a people that he had elected, the Spirit cooperating, but the Son concerned with all. Well I think you can see Mr. Murray and his statement is a rather good statement. Where is it? The atonement as the completed work of Christ must always be viewed in the light of the inter Trinitarian

economy of salvation. In other words the three persons of the Trinity cooperate with the same purpose in mind. You cannot say the Father elected a great company of people. The Son however came to die for all. And the Holy Spirit indwells only this particular people. You see what we're talking about? There is a dissonance in the Trinity. You cannot have that.

Well that finally dawned on me. I don't know whether it was a result of one my students or not, but it dawned, and it has stuck. The Father, the Son, the Spirit cooperate in the same activity, and if we do have a divine Trinity with a divine Father, divine Son, divine Spirit, that cooperation is perfect and total completely, harmonious. So there are lots of things Paul talks about in this passage. I even know a few more things than I am talking to you about, [Laughter] but this is the important thing when we talk about atonement that we notice that there is no dissonance in the Trinity and that the persons of the Trinity cooperate and when anyone speaks to you and says, “Yes, I do believe that God has elected a certain people, and the Spirit of God indwells a certain people and they happen to be ultimately those who are the elect people that the Father has elected. But our Lord gives himself for all.” I cannot believe that there can be that dissonance in the Trinity, that the Son operates contrary to the Father who has sent the Son. And was not Fred telling us of how this commandment have I received from my Father and that commandment is a singular commandment that the Son carries out perfectly. So I am telling you a lot of personal things that came to me through the years because it meant a lot to me through the years having taught at an institution for a lengthy period of time to realize that I must affirm a doctrine contrary to our doctrinal statement. And it was contrary to a doctrinal statement. I do not blame the president of the institution for telling me, “Lewis, we are going to have to come to the parting of the ways because we do not want some one on our institution teaching who is teaching the Calvinism to which you hold.” That's all right. That was his right. He is a friend of mine still, and I respect that right. He was one of my teachers and I respect him. I learned some things from him. So

he says, “In the fullness of time God sent forth his Son who came to be of a woman, came to be under the law to redeem (That is effectually redeem) those that were under law that we might receive the adoption of Sons.”

We enter life by birth. We enjoy life because we are members of an adopted family. There is whole history that lies back of the doctrine of adoption, very important in reformed thinking incidentally and it would require discussion of two Latin words, *adrogatio* which had to do with the adoption of someone who was not part of your family and then *adoptio*, which was a term that was used of adoption of someone within the family, but to enter a family as adoption and by adoption meant that you entered into the family and participated in all that the family possessed so that an adopted Son became an heir. This is the kind of adoption the New Testament talks about. We are adopted sons. We have come into the family. We are heirs because we're heirs of God and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So the adoption of sons, not potential, not possible, but this is effectual so that we are sons of God and we have been redeemed.

Now the apostle in verse 6 and verse 7 says, “And because you're sons God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts crying Abba Father.” This is the corroboration of our status. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the test of life. “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If you do not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within your heart, you do not belong to him. This is what the apostle states Romans chapter 8 verse 9 states it plainly. The test of life is the possession of the Holy Spirit. “And so because you are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying Abba Father.” The filial cry of a son of God. How marvelous it is to get down upon your knees before the Lord and say, “Father.” [Amen from audience]

You know that's a great feeling, and I want to tell you something as an old man. It gets better as the days go by. [Amen from audience] Because the time in which you enter the presence of the Lord is nearer. The less some of you are sitting in the audience and say, “I am not eighty years of age like Dr. Johnson. I've got many, many years.” Do

you know I taught in theology seminary for almost forty years. I taught in two or three of them. There are many of my students that are already in heaven. Did you know that? Some have been in heaven for twenty-five years. They were students of mine. Young boys, young like some of you sitting, they're in heaven. We never know do we? So, “Because you are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying Abba Father, wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son.” This is the difference. The Galatians were in danger of moving back to old covenant status. Circumcised in order to be saved, and so the apostle says, “You are no more a servant. You are a son. And if you are son you are an heir of God through the law.” No, you know what he says is you are an heir of God through Christ.

I have the Greek text before me here, and in Galatians chapter 4 in verse 7 the apostle writes it this way. I am just going to translate it literally for you. “So then no longer are you a servant, a *doulos*, but a *uios*, a son, and if a son an heir also or also an heir through God. (Emphatic, emphatic position.) You are an heir through God.” To get the point is you are an heir of God. You are an heir. The Greek text says simply “heir” you are an heir through God. Very emphatic.

In other words we are not an heir by keeping the law. We are an heir through God, and what he has done through Jesus Christ. You are an heir through him. [Amen] That's an emphatic in fact it's in the emphatic position in the text, at the end of the text. “Through God.” So what can we say, what can we say?

The legalist, there is a proper use of the law incidentally. I am not attacking the law. I am talking about something different but the person who has a wrong view concerning the Mosaic Law has failed to see that the set time has come that he talks about, “the fullness of time.” “Sons obey out of love not fear are rich not poor and have a glorious future.” They have been adopted, and this glorious work is the accomplishment of the Trinity in beautiful concert the Father electing, the Son redeeming the Spirit

confirming by his coming into the heart with the divine prescience to consummate the eternal covenant of redemption.

What Fred was talking about that commandment that I have received of my Father, there is no greater statement of the covenant of redemption than that made by C.H. Spurgeon, marvelous statement. I suggest you look it up. I don't have time to talk about it, but it's a marvelous statement Mr. Spurgeon makes of the three persons in heaven, covenanting together each one to do a particular aspect of the atoning work. The Father outlining what he would be doing, the Son agreeing to do his part, the Spirit agreeing to do his part and together the divine Trinity accomplishing the divine work.

We hear a lot today because of evangelicals and Catholics together about the great solace of Scripture, *Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura, Sola Cristo*, by Christ alone. I have argued in a little paper I've wrote that we ought to have *solo stauro* [Amen from audience] by his cross alone. And then of course to God alone be the glory, *Soli Deo Gloria*. Well that's really what Paul is talking here when he talks about the Father the Son and the Spirit in this marvelous work, so we say *Soli Deo Gloria* to God alone be the glory. [Amen] Let me leave in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous words that the apostle has written. We thank Thee Lord for they impress upon us so much the effectual working of our great triune God. We are so grateful that by marvelous eternal love Thou hast touched our hearts and brought us to the knowledge of the Son of God, and we thank Thee for the confidence that we have that our Lord being the eternal Son that we have a valid reliable word concerning the truths of life in the holy Scriptures. We pray Lord that Thou wilt so move us that we may give us to give him, to give our great God in heaven the kind of submissive obedience and love that Thou doest deserve and should have from us. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

“John Bunyan Conference, Lecture III” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

[Song] “It Is Well With My Soul” [Singing]