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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Raven at Shaw's Corner, Redhill
on Sunday evening August 7th 1949

"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. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Galatians 4. 4,5,6.

Nothing more clearly demonstrates the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the dire evil of sin, than that in order to save poor sinners God spared not His own Son. The disease that calls for such a remedy must be an evil disease; a disease that will yield to no other treatment must be a foul disease, and one of the quarrels which men entertain against the gospel is that according to the gospel sin is so exceedingly sinful that nothing would do for the deliverance of sinners from its power short of the coming of the Son of God from Heaven, "being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". And when men hear that, when they hear attached to it the sweet gracious invitations of the gospel, their pride and their enmity rises up against it. I have seen a man lashed almost into a fury on hearing some of the sweetest and most tender invitations of the gospel put before him. "I can't believe it and I won't believe it!" he cried, just because it meant that if these things were true he was a poor wretched, helpless, miserable and hell-deserving sinner, and the pride of the human heart will not brook that.

But here we read that "When the fulness of the time was come". God has His time for all things, His time for all His purposes. He is never before His time and He is never behind His time, and we read in the Scriptures again and again, "and it came to pass", "and it came to pass". The thing that God had determined, the thing that He foreknew, and that had its place in His predestinating purposes, at the right time, at the time He had appointed, at the best and the wisest time, "came to pass". And so here, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son". One's mind goes back to the Garden of Eden, where in the midst of the very scene of the fall of our first parents, the words of grace were spoken that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And then the mind travels on to Abraham and the promises made by God to him, that in his seed should all nations of the earth be blessed. We recall too, all those lambs and other victims sacrificed by God's appointment from the time of the fall right through the

levitical dispensation, and in all that there was the fore-shadowing of the coming of the Lamb of God, as Abraham said to his son Isaac, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering". We think of the promises given by the mouth of God's holy prophets, and of the wonderful testimonies given concerning Christ, His sufferings, and the glory that should follow, throughout all these ages, and "when the fulness of the time was come", the promise was fulfilled, the thing that God purposed was accomplished. The promised Messiah came into the world, and all that had transpired from the beginning right down to the birth of Christ did not alter the purpose of God, could not nullify the promise. You think, for instance, of the Jewish nation, the children of Israel, of their ill-behaviour, what a stiff-necked people they proved themselves to be, how they failed to do the thing they had promised with so much zeal, "all that the Lord our God hath commanded us we will do". How quickly they forgot His word and His goodness, how quickly they turned aside from the holy commandment that was given to them, and yet all that they did, all the iniquity that they practised, and all the sin by which the world was deluged right down to the time of the Messiah, did not alter the purposes of God. "In the fulness of time" God in His faithfulness and in His love for His people did send forth His Son. And it is a very arresting thought that while God is looking upon this sin-ridden world, and there arises up before Him continually such a cloud of iniquity, such innumerable abominations from every village, from every city, from every nation, and from every individual home and heart, yet that does not turn Him aside from His purpose, it does not change His love for His people, it does not cause Him to repent of His purposes of grace. But "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son", His own proper Son, the Son of the Father in truth and love, His only begotten Son. "God sent forth His Son". John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us". O what love shines in this, love to sinners. that "God sent forth His Son"! "He gave His only begotten Son", "He spared not His own Son," "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief", "He made His soul an offering for sin". "God sent forth His Son". O how this will be matter for eternal wonder! If we try to look at it, the glory of it dazzles our sight. It is too deep a mystery for us to fathom, we cannot reach to the height of it, that God of pure love to a multitude of sinners should have sent His own Son into this world, that the Eternal Word "was made flesh and dwelt among us". "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman", "in the likeness of sinful flesh." You remember that when

the Israelites in the wilderness for their murmuring were bitten by the fiery, flying serpents, Moses cried to God on behalf of the people, and God commanded him to make a serpent of brass, a serpent like unto those that were biting the people with such disastrous effect. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it on a pole and lifted it up. It was to be a serpent of brass. Christ was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, I could wish we might be helped to reflect upon it a little, to think what this really means, that the Son of God came down from the heights of glory, He came forth from the Father. He who was rich, rich in glory from everlasting, was made poor, He became poor, He voluntarily stooped, not only to be in the likeness of sinful flesh, born of a woman, but to be under the law. "God sent forth His Son made of a woman". I have often said that He did not appear with all the trappings and dignity of earthly royalty. His garment was the rough garment of a north Galilean peasant, His following consisted merely of a few poor fishermen, unlearned men, men who were despised for their illiteracy, these were His following, and daily He was in close contact with the poor. There is something very precious in this thought, that though He was rich, though He as the eternally begotten Son of the Father was so rich in glory, yet He stooped to such lowliness and poverty here upon the earth, as that the poorest of the people, the weakest and the most afflicted and the most miserable found no barrier between Him and them. They had free access to Him. There is something very sweet to my mind in this. I have, I hope, felt a little of the sweetness of the thought that Christ was so easy of access to poor, needy people when He dwelt below. It is very difficult to get an interview with our own beloved King, is it not? You and I would find it impossible, I suppose, but here is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords so easy of access. "Come unto Me", said He, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". He invites the poor to come to Him, He invites the burdened, the sorrowful, the hungry and the thirsty to come to Him, and there is no barrier. Pride and unbelief are barriers, self-righteousness is a barrier, a conceit of our own goodness is a barrier, thinking great things of ourselves is a barrier between us and Christ, but poverty is not, weakness is not, ignorance is not, a tempted, distressed condition is not, weariness and a burdened spirit is no barrier between the soul and Christ. "God sent forth His Son made of a woman". "He took not upon Him the nature of angels", but He took on Him the nature of the seed of Abraham, "made of a woman" by a miraculous conception, by the over-shadowing of the Holy Ghost. "Great is the mystery of godliness", but can you say from your heart sometimes,

"I love the Incarnate Mystery
And there I fix my trust"?

Do you see this mystery of godliness, the mystery of the incarnate Son of God to be the very foundation stone of the gospel, the very foundation of salvation, that there is no salvation without it? If the foundation be removed what can the righteous do?" If this be not true, who then can be saved? "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law". Christ was made of a woman that He might be in all points made like unto His brethren, sin excepted. He was made of a woman that He might endure reproaches, that He might learn obedience by the things He suffered, that He might be under the law as the Surety of the Church, the performer of its biddings on their behalf, and to bear its curse, the curse due to their dreadful sins. "Made under the law". O how the justice of God appears in this! The justice of God shines with an awful splendour in the condemnation of the wicked, but it shines more brightly and with sweet lustre when He condemns sin in the sinless flesh of His incarnate Son. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law". He sent forth His Son to redeem, to purchase with His own blood, a multitude of sinners who should be to the praise of the glory of His grace. To redeem them; in redemption a price has to be paid. These were to be redeemed by Christ, they were under the law and under its curse and condemnation, obnoxious to the wrath of God, the wrath that is to be revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and Christ came to pay the redemption price. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. The price that He must pay is nothing less than His own precious life, the pouring out of His soul unto death, the shedding of His own precious blood. There is the price of redemption. "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". O what a weighty word this is in a believing heart! The thought of being redeemed by such a price, at such a great cost, even the ignominy, the bloody sweat, the death upon the cross of the everlasting Son of God. O what a price!

"Angels here may gaze and wonder
What the God of love could mean,
When He tore the heart asunder
Never once defiled by sin".

And thus Christ must suffer in order to redeem His people. He was made of a woman, made under the law that He might be a near Kinsman, to Him belonged the right of redemption. "To redeem them that were under the law". O consider then the preciousness of this redemption price! the preciousness of Him who paid it! I wish the truth might be made lovely and attractive in our hearts this evening, that it is the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ that gives such infinite value and virtue to His sufferings, and His death, such power to His precious blood. "Twas our Creator for us bled", said the hymn-writer. He shed His own heart's blood, and therefore that precious blood of Christ has such power and such virtue; if the Holy Ghost but apply it to a guilty sinner's conscience it brings cleansing, it brings pardon, it brings peace with God. One says.

"I felt it applied and I joyfully cried,
Me, me thou hast loved and for me thou has died."

O 'tis no wild fancy of our brain, it is the rich experience of a believing heart, it is an experience that those who are taught by the Spirit long after, and seek for and pant for even for long years before they get it, but they cannot be satisfied without it, without the realisation of the forgiveness of sins. I say the precious blood, the atoning death of the dear Redeemer, the forgiveness of sins is a great matter, it is a solemn matter with them. The burden of sin is so great, the sinfulness of sin is made so manifest that to be forgiven, to be forgiven the total sum of one's iniquity is a great thing. And it is the blood of Christ that seals pardon upon the conscience. Some of you I trust, know what it is to experience that blood-bought and divinely sealed pardon upon your consciences, and to enter into the truth of those words, "if the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ", "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God". It was by virtue of that blood that He came to shed, the death that He came to die, that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke with such power and effect to a poor sinful woman who wept out her contrition at His feet. He said, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee". And so He does even in this day speak with power to poor, guilty, burdened sinners, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. One says,

"I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood,
I view the mighty Sacrifice,
And I have peace with God".

Christ came, then, to redeem them that were under the law, to redeem them from its curse, from its condemnation, by Himself being made a curse, by Himself enduring the condemnation, by bearing in His own sacred Person the stripes due to them for their sins. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted", and again, "by His stripes we are healed". "To redeem them that were under the law". There is then, by His redemption deliverance from under the law, and the Apostle can triumphantly say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus", no condemnation. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It is God that justifieth. O the majesty of that word, the divine graciousness of it! "It is God that justifieth", and there is no higher court than the court of Heaven. If He justifies a sinner then that sinner is just, and we read that "He is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus". So we read of the publican, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other". Then Paul in the 8th Romans goes on to say, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us". O Christ is the great intercessor and His precious blood speaks loud in the court of heaven, speaks better things than that of Abel. "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". Again we refer to that passage in John's first epistle, "Behold what manner of love the Father bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God". That he should be called, Saul of Tarsus the persecutor, the blasphemer, the injurious person, that he should be called a son of God, that he should be adopted into the family of God! And then, that Ephesian and Corinthian sinners, and sinners of the worst description should be brought into the family of God, made sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty! And "such were some of you". "That we might receive the adoption of sons. And this relationship is wholly in Christ. We do not attain to it by any contributions of our own, by any virtue inherent in us. People speak today, you know, (it is quite common teaching in the pulpits of the day in this country of ours) that by perseverance in the way of obedience in following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ you come to a realization of your sonship, even as He realised it. That is not the gospel, that is not the gospel! If it were, it would be a gospel of condemnation to me, there would be no hope for me upon that ground. If I have to contribute anything towards my own salvation I am utterly lost. If by doing anything worthy of God I

am to attain to sonship then I can never attain to it, but this sonship, this relationship of sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty is wholly in Christ on the grounds of what He is and what He has done. "That we might receive the adoption of sons, and because ye are sons", made so by the sovereign grace of God, brought near to Him in His Son Jesus Christ, "because ye are sons God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father". "Because ye are sons". It is not our saying Abba, Father, that makes us the sons of God. It is a very sweet thing to be enabled to say it, to be led by the spirit of adoption to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven", that is very sweet, but it does not make us the sons of God. "Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts". And referring again to John's testimony in the third chapter of his first epistle, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God", he goes on to say further, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is". "Because ye are sons". Yes, with all the infirmities that are upon His people in this life, with all the afflictions they have to endure, all the temptations under which they have to labour, and their sins day by day, their sad and shameful shortcomings, they are the sons of God notwithstanding. "And because ye are sons", that relationship, I repeat it, is wholly in Christ, in all the fulness of it, "because ye are sons God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts". How does this work out in experience? Why, where God sends forth the spirit of His Son into a sinner's heart, there are the feelings of a son. You remember when the prodigal came to himself, he began to think like this, "There is bread in my father's house". It was, "my father's house", and so it is where the spirit of adoption comes, there is the spirit and attitude of a son, though far off, though wretched and ashamed, though burdened with guilt and though feeling quite out of countenance with a sense of shameful folly, yet there is the spirit and attitude of a son, "I will arise and go to my father". God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts crying". O I like this, "crying". It does not say that there was clear articulation here of the word, but there is a crying. You see, a little babe cannot say Mother or Father, but it cries after its parent, and so it is often with a coming sinner, with all his diseases, his painful necessities, there is a crying, "Father". "Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry".

There is the cry of a child, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." "God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying". And notice here that Father is twice repeated, as it is in the Hebrew form, and then as it is in the Greek, showing this, that not only Jewish sinners but Gentile sinners are blessed equally with this spirit of adoption. The family of God consists of Gentiles too. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Well, one has said but very little upon so great a subject, but I would say now, as I have sometimes said before, I would that we might be helped to take the word home and there meditate upon it and pray about it, and that the Holy Spirit would point out to us something of the truth and the grace of it, for His name's sake, Amen.