



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 2:17–18

“Jesus—Wholly Sufficient of Life’s Trials”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the marvelous instruction that the author of this great epistle has given to us. We look forward to the day when we will get acquainted with him, for he was surely one of the bright lights of the early Church, and we’re grateful for the way in which he has centered his attention upon the somewhat neglected topic of the High Priesthood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the epistle. We thank Thee for the fact that we have it in our hands. Thou hast preserved it for us. And, again, Lord, we ask for the illumination of the Holy Spirit as we read and ponder the words and the clauses, the phrases and the sentences that he has written. Give us faithfulness to Thy word and, then, we pray that thou wilt enable us to be submissive to the truth that we see. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this meeting now.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Well, in the 17th and 18th verses of the 2nd chapter, we come to one of the great concepts of the divine economy, and that, of course, is the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Evangelicals are usually not so wise when it comes to the priesthood of Christ. In fact, to be frank, they are usually so ignorant of basic elements of it that at the mention, the congregation lapses into something like a blue funk. But it is one of the great things in the word of God and it’s something that we should give very close attention to.

Many years ago, I heard someone speaking at the Dallas Seminary Chapel, referring to Donald Grey Barnhouse, and my interest picked up because of my relationship to him. And the individual was Carl Armerding, and Mr. Armerding, or Dr. Armerding, was one of the teachers at the theological seminary for many years and, in fact, served on the faculty of the seminary on two occasions.

But he said that he was in a little church where Dr. Barnhouse or a church where Dr. Barnhouse was preaching and he preached that morning on the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus Christ. And he said he was in the audience, and as the people got up to leave, after the message, the pastor, he heard speaking to one of the people who was present, and he had been the pastor for the church of thirteen years, he heard him say to his friend, after the message, “What a daring thing for Donald to do, to preach on the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now, I think, I know that that is generally true today in our evangelical churches. It would be very rare when an individual came into the ordinary evangelical church and preached on the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he surely would avoid the exposition of the truth of the Melchizedekian High Priesthood of Jesus Christ, if it were possible.

The importance of the priesthood lies in the fact that the priesthood is that which governs access to God. And, after all, that’s the aim of all spiritual knowledge and the channel by which that knowledge comes to us: The priesthood. Now, if we are to understand biblical truth, we must understand that. But more than that, if we are to understand religious truth we must understand priesthood; all religions usually in one way or another, lay stress upon priesthood.

We know, particularly, the Roman Catholic Church where the ministers of the word of God among them or their ministers even when they are not ministering the word of God are called priests, because they are small mediators between the people who are members and the Lord God, so all religions generally have some form of priesthood.

Now, the author was speaking to people that he knew understood priesthood, because he doesn’t stop and give an introduction about what priesthood is. Here, in verse 17 and verse 18 of

chapter 2, he mentions it for the first time; and he mentions it in such a way that it’s obvious that he thought that they understood what a priest was. In fact, they may well have understood that Jesus Christ was a priest, specifically, within the Christian faith. At any rate, he writes these words, and these are the two verses we’ll look at tonight.

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people: For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”

So that very abrupt mention of priesthood lets us know that he thought they knew what a priest was and, therefore, they could come to understand Jesus Christ’s priesthood without an exposition of what priesthood really is. Priesthood springs out of the deepest need of the human soul, the sense of the need for the forgiveness of sins and of access in worship.

I think, it’s true that all of us, if we look at ourselves honestly, and if we can bring ourselves to look at ourselves back before we knew Christ as our Savior, we all had the sense of inadequacy. I know, I speak for myself; I grew up in the Presbyterian Church. I was in the Sunday school. I was baptized. I spent my early years in the Sunday school. And then, when I was old enough to avoid it, I avoided it as much as I could. Spent my time out on the golf course; wanted to get acquainted with the natural revelation of God out there. But I do know this that after I was married and I came into a meeting where the word of God was preached, the one thing that impressed me was the fact that I was, in myself, inadequate for a relationship with the Lord God. A priest, the idea of a priest, would be something that would be very special for me and for others, too, because it’s through the priest and the priesthood that we have the treasures of forgiveness and strength and consolation.

We are the wandering people of God. In fact, the thing that called that to my mind is the fact that I was looking this past week at a reference to a work by Ernst Käsemann, a well-known German scholar, who wrote a book called, *Das Wandern Gottes Volk*, or *The Wandering People of God*.

We are such and do have a priest who is able to bring us into relationship with the Lord God and through that relationship provide us with the forgiveness of sins, with strength and consolation for the needs that we have in this sojourn that all of us must take upon the face of this earth. That’s a great comfort to us. It surely is a great comfort to me.

Verse 17, then, he talks about the Son’s identification with the brethren, because if he’s going to be our priest, he must be one of us. So he’s just said, “For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.”

He’s been talking about the fact that the Son of God has come into our society and by virtue of what he has accomplished, he has regained for us the sovereignty over the face of the earth. He cited Psalm 5, we’ve talked about that more than once, now, in verse 6 through verse 8, what God intended for man to be, what we lost, Jesus Christ by becoming one of us has regained it for us.

And then, we sought to answer the question, why must he suffer in order to do this? And the author says, it’s by virtue of the fact that he must become one of us, and he must bear the penalty that all of us have as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden. In other words, representative suffering is what is required and through that man may regain his destiny. He talks about the identification in verse 10 through verse 13, and then he talks about the suffering through the remainder of the chapter. So the sphere of evil enters and is overcome by our great High Priest. The purpose of this representative solidarity is, first, the defeat of Satan, which we looked at last time, then, as a result of that, the deliverance of men. He says in the 16th verse, “He doesn’t give aid to angels; He gives aid to the seed of Abraham.” And, he’s just said, “release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” So the purpose, then, is to deliver us by the defeat of Satan and to give us relief from the bondage of sin into which we are born.

And then the final thing is to discharge this priestly office by which this arrangement is accomplished. Notice the very first word, verse 17. My text has “Therefore,” it’s really a little stronger inferential conjunction than “therefore,” “wherefore.” And I believe, I didn’t look at the

Authorized Version, it seems to me, that rings in my mind as being in the Authorized Version. At any rate, “Wherefore” or “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like unto His brethren.” Because men are to be redeemed, he must become one of us. He is not helping the angels. We talked last time about Campbell Morgan’s illustration, and talked about how, as a result of what Christ has done, men are delivered and not angels. I made reference to the fact that Mrs. Browning wrote that wonderful hymn, “The Seraphim,” in which the seraphim’s are watching the Lord Jesus accomplish his work on earth and one of the seraphs looks at the host of ransomed souls, at the church and says, “Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise their passion song of blood,” and the other angel or seraph replies. “And we,” that is, we angels, we angelic beings, “We extend our holy vacant hands toward the throne crying, “we have no music!”

The point of Mrs. Browning’s comments is that God redeems men, he passes by angels. Angels do not know redemption. No angel, Campbell Morgan said, “will ever be able to chant that solo, ‘He loved me and gave Himself for me.’”

I remember, sometime back, some years ago, that it used to be very common for soloists in church to sing that, I think, a marvelous hymn, “Holy, Holy is what the angels sing. And, I expect to hear them make the courts of heaven ring. But when I sing redemption’s story, they will fold their wings, for angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings.” That’s precisely, I think, what Scripture teaches. “Wherefore,” verse 17, “in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.”

There is a wonderful passage in our, in the Gospel of Matthew, giving one of the incidents of our Lord’s life that, I think, illustrates the points that I want to make, very well, and, it’s the incident of our Lord walking upon the water. And I’d like to read these words, because we’ll refer to them at the end of the message. Verse 22 of Matthew, chapter 14, Matthew writes.

“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on

the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch three to six A.M. of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. [A bigger miracle than our Lord walking upon the water, wouldn’t you say? I would. At any rate.] But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, [You can just see Peter, he’s walking on the water, actually, walking on the water. But then, he looks off and catches a view of what’s happening around him and, of course, taking his eyes off of our Lord because that’s the place from which his strength was coming, we read]: he began to sink and cried out, [Cried out one of those marvelous prayers of the Bible.] “Lord, save me!” [Isn’t that a wonderful little prayer? No fancy introductions. No fancy body of the prayer. No unusual phraseology worked in to amaze and astonish the audience, while they are bowed. But, the simple prayer, “Lord, save me!”] And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him.”

Now, that’s the word that’s interesting because that’s a word that means, simply, to help. To lay hold of, with a view to helping. And that’s the word that is used in chapter 2, verse 16, where we read, “For indeed He does not give aid to angels.” He doesn’t help angels, but he lays hold with a view to helping the seed of Abraham.” The very same word. And Matthew concludes.

“And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.””

So now just having said, “He doesn’t give aid to angels, He gives help, He lays hold of with the view to helping, the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.” So it is men, it is not angels, who are helped.

Those of us who have lived for a long time who have been exposed to some unusual trials, some of you in this audience, have been exposed to far greater trials than I. But I’ve had some trials. I remember when I first started preaching. I didn’t have many trials, everything was lovely. I hadn’t had the experience of trials. But I went through some of that, and I know what God can do for you in the midst of your trials. And so when he says, “a merciful and faithful High Priest,” I think, at least in one respect, that has been underlined for me. In all things to be made like. More than true manhood, in a sense. Also, the whole mass of human sorrow, man’s cup, our Lord must be like us. He must not simply be a man, but he must have the experiences of men. And he has had the experiences of men.

If you go through the Gospel accounts, and just read the life of Christ, read it as if you are seeking to find out what his days are like, and you will see that he knows just precisely the experiences that we know, and we experience, apart from sin. So in all things, more than true manhood, the whole mass of what it is to be a human being, and the experiences that belong to human beings. It behooved him, it was a moral requirement is the force of the verb. Why? Well, because he loved and he would save and, therefore, it behooved him to be made like his brethren, to be a merciful and faithful High Priest. Now, this, of course, is the purpose of the identification.

Now, I want to underline a few things here. We’ve already seen that he’s made reference to the “seed of Abraham.” He hasn’t said every single individual without exception. That’s very plain. He’s talked about the brethren. He’s talked about His people. He talks about the “seed of Abraham.” It’s that special group of people for which the Lord Jesus Christ prayed in his great High Priestly prayer. “I pray for them, I do not pray for the world.”

So our Lord here is to be “a merciful and faithful High Priest” to the seed of Abraham. Compassionate? Yes, because that means he exercises mercy toward us. Faithful? Yes, because he’s faithful to the promises that God has given to us.

You know, I’ve been reading through the Bible. I’m getting near the end of Psalms, now. And I’ve been underlining as I go through, some of the things that I want to just go over, and see them in their wholeness. And one of the things has been the promises that God has made to his covenantal people, his people, the seed of Abraham. And, over and over again, through the books, so far, and when we get to Isaiah, when I get, when I get to Isaiah and Jeremiah and the minor prophets, I know that’s going to be even stronger. Those words that God has given through the prophets and others, underline so strongly the faithfulness of the Lord God to the promises, the covenantal promises that he has made in those great covenants of Abraham and David and then the New Covenant. So faithful, he is faithful! He’s faithful in fulfilling the requirements of the redeemer that the divine promises might become ours.

How wonderful it is to know that He’s accomplished that work. He’s not through with it yet, because as we read, he’s a High Priest, ever living to make intercession for us. But he has accomplished the redeeming work, the foundation for the fulfillment of all the promises He’s made. So, merciful and faithful “High Priest.”

Priesthood? Now, in the Old Testament, of course, we read about the Levites, the priests, the sons of Aaron, and the High Priest. And, when you read through the Book of Leviticus, I hope you are reading through the Bible. Dan has given us an exhortation to do this, and when the preachers do that, you’re supposed to do it. So when you get to the Book of Leviticus, Martha and I are just about finished with Leviticus. That’s a second reading, incidentally, that I’m doing because I’m reading with her. Leviticus is not the easiest book to read. There are sections of Leviticus that is very easy to dose through. [Laughter] But, the things that are set forth there are the things that are very important, because they are things that point to our Lord.



So we have the Levites, we have the priests, we have the high priest, Aaron. What were the functions of the priests? Well, the priest was the spiritual representative of the people. And, of course, Aaron was “the” representative of the people. Moses, of course, belonged to the priestly family; he was from the Levitical Tribe.

What did the priest do? Well, first of all, he offered sacrifice; he made propitiation. That was his duty. And, secondly, he made intercession. He offered the sacrifices; he also offered the intercession.

Now, I want to ask you a little question, for whom did he offer? Well, he offered for the seed of Abraham, did he not? For whom did he pray? Well, he prayed for the seed of Abraham. He prayed for the same people for whom he offered sacrifice. In other words, the offering of the sacrifice is co-extensive with the offering of intercession. It’s so plain. It’s so astonishing that people miss that. And, to underline it, what does he bear on his breast? The names of the Tribes of Israel. Doesn’t he? What does he bear on his shoulders? The Tribes of Israel. He’s the priest for the seed of Abraham. And so our great High Priest is the priest for the seed of Abraham. We are children of Abraham by faith, of course, Paul tells us, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the priest made intercession. He also, thirdly, taught the law, taught the word of God. When individuals wished for special information, they could go to the priests. The prophets, also, were charismatic figures, who also gave the word of God. But the priests were the teachers of the word of God. And one other thing, of course, they did was they blessed the people. In other words, the Aaronic benediction, which in Christian circles is largely, now, reserved for the wedding ceremony. The Aaronic benediction was a blessing, which the high priest gave to the people of God.

So those are the features of the priest’s work. Here, of course, he’s interested in propitiation. He goes on to say, “in things pertaining to God, and to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” In other words, the priest did not confine himself to teaching. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not confine himself to teaching. In fact, I think, I’ve mentioned this before in this series that it’s really interesting that the epistles of the New Testament make so little reference to what our Lord taught. What the

epistles of the new Testament stress, as you’ll know if you will read them, is what our Lord did in his saving work on Calvary’s cross. His death! His burial! His resurrection! There are no expositions by the apostles of the Sermon on the Mount or of the Olivet Discourse or the great parables of chapter 13 of Matthew. In other words, the apostles laid great stress on what our Lord did. He offered sacrifice and so he came to help us, not merely by being a wise teacher even though he was the infallible teacher of the word of God, he came in order to be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

He did not come simply to reveal God’s nature and the beauty of holiness that is characteristic of the nature of God. He didn’t come to be a brilliant example of what it is to walk by faith, although he was that, and there are some scattered references to that, of course. What he came to do, and this is so important to grasp, he came to alter the relations that a certain people of God have to God in heaven. That’s what he did. He came to take us out of the company of those who are under sin and headed for eternal separation from God and to bring us back into relationship with the Lord God. He came to take the sons of Adam and give them back again what they lost when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. So to put it again in this way, he came to alter our relations to the Lord God. He came to do something, as well as to say something. So he is our advocate for our salvation, and for our restoration to what God intended us to be; to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Propitiation is a big word, isn’t it? You know, there are a lot of Christians who think that if you mention a term like propitiation or sanctification or things like this, that that’s a little, that’s expecting too much of people who sit in the pew, to expect them to understand a word like propitiation, to expect them to understand reconciliation. Well, we can understand all of the terminology that is characteristic of the age in which we are living, the electronic age. No one says, as they buy their computer and begin to look at the manuals that this is something I can never understand and I want to, I admit that we’d like to get a lot of shortcuts, but it’s necessary for us to learn terminology, isn’t it? If you’re in the insurance business, you have to learn terminology. If you’re in the building business or if you’re in the real estate business, even in real estate, you have to

know a few things. We have some real estate men here, and that’s was my special word to them for the night. [laughter] But in every form of business, we have to learn technical things, so why do we react so negatively when we read in the word of God a word like propitiation, which is filled with such great blessings?

Let me put it very simply, for us, to make propitiation is to satisfy the claims, the righteous and holy claims of God against us. To satisfy them! For, those claims are the claims of our lives, forever, eternal separation from God. Our Lord came to satisfy the righteous claims of God for us, and the holy claims of God against us sinners, and make it possible for us not only to enter into relationship with him, but to enter into such a relationship with him that we are declared righteous before him; we, who are unrighteous, we who are unholy; to declare us righteous, to give us a righteousness that is acceptable to the Lord God. That’s the work of our great High Priest. I don’t hear a single, Hallelujah. I hope those hallelujahs, at least, are said within your heart, because that’s the ultimate blessing of the life that God has given to us.

To make propitiation for the sins of the people, what people? The seed of Abraham. Now, I’m not saying in any way, whatsoever, as I’m trying to point out that the work of Christ was directed toward a certain people. I would not want you to get the slightest impression that the work of Jesus Christ was not sufficient for every sinner who ever lived, if they turned to him. There’ll be no individual turning to the Lord and requesting forgiveness, pleading for forgiveness, who’ll be turned away and told, no, it was not for you. The very fact that you turn is, of course, evidence that you are one of his. But everyone who turns to the Lord God and believes in Him who is our Savior, by the blood shed on Calvary’s cross, shall be saved. So we believe, I’m speaking for myself and a few other people, we believe in the sufficiency of the atoning work of Christ, but we believe, also, that that atoning work of Christ was designed by the Lord God for the seed of Abraham, for his elect people.

Now, if you say, well, that seems unfair to me? So I repeat, if you turn to the Lord, you’ll have salvation. But if you say, that’s unfair, I don’t want to turn to the Lord, then my friend, you’re getting precisely what you want. So you don’t have any complaint there. Don’t you see? This

Gospel is for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s the propitiation for our sins, the sins of his people.

Now, the author goes on to say something else. He talks about his priestly sympathy in verse 18, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” The High Priest, we are told in chapter 5, must not only be human, he must be humane. They put it that way. Chapter 5, verse 1, our author says, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.” Not sin, in our Lord’s case, but “weakness.” “Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man taketh this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.” So he says here then, for in that, let me turn back to chapter 2, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”

Now, I need to say a word or two about this 17th verse, with reference to the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. His sympathy stems from temptation and suffering too. Testing, he received, toward the sin of unbelief, and did not fail. Our testings, also, are that way.

Now, for those of you that have the little outline that I put here, for the illustration, I’d like to take a look at this so you’ll understand precisely what I think is involved in the testing. You notice in this diagram that I have drawn a line across which represents trial, the beginning of trial on the left side all the way to the infinity of the degree of testing, let’s just assume. And I put that five percent, ten percent, fifteen percent, twenty percent just to indicate the increasing intensity of the trials.

Now, you’ll notice these arrows, the vertical arrows, they are designed to represent you and me. For example, when the strength of the temptation approaches five percent, of course, we couldn’t talk like this mathematically, we’re talking about something that’s infinite, but let’s just say five percent. Then at that strength of testing, there’s some of us that fall. I’m probably along right there. And then ten percent, those that get by the five percent and get to ten. Put in your name, if

you like. Fifteen percent. Twenty percent. That’s where Howard Prier is. Twenty percent. And there may be some who do a bit better than Howard Prier. But, of course, we all fall, because we’re sinners. We cannot measure up to the infinity of the degree of testing. How many times have you heard people say, it’s those who have experienced sin that are best able to sympathize with others. How often have you heard that? See. There are some even raising your hands. The rest of you didn’t raise your hands, but I know you’ve heard it.

In fact, it’s almost common to human nature to believe that if you’ve fallen into sin, you are, therefore, better able to understand the trials of others. Just the opposite. Do you know why? Our Lord didn’t fall into sin. As a matter of fact, where you and I fall, the Lord Jesus overcame. The very place where you are tested, he knows, because he has overcome at that very place. So suppose you do a little better than Howard Prier and you get beyond the twenty percent intensity of trial. It might be Ann Prier, for example. You cannot ever say that our Lord is not sufficient for that intensity of trial. He knows precisely what that is because he has been there. He has endured the infinity of the degree successfully. And because he is the holy Son of God, he is the one who most sympathizes. He can sympathize with me at five percent and Howard at twenty percent and if some of you in this audience, speaking illustratively, can go on much farther on in the life of holiness, with God, I won’t ask you to raise your hand. He even understands the place where you fall, because being the perfect High Priest, he has the complete understanding of all intensity of degrees of temptation to turn away from the will of God because he has been there. He has been there.

So in all of the experiences of life, when you get down upon your knees, you can say, “Lord, you know the intensity of the temptation that I face. You have known that. Help me!, Lord,” like Peter, “save me!” It’s so marvelous for us to know, as our author says here, “For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Look. Because he has not sinned, he, therefore, is the greatest aid in the midst of our sinning and temptation. It’s just the opposite. The sinful man fell. He doesn’t understand the intensity of some of the others who have passed beyond that test. But our Lord perfectly understands. Never forget that.

Now, I noted three things here that I’d like to just mention. Christ has sympathy with holy, not unholy, temptations. He does not sympathize with our sin. He must die for that sin. He does not sympathize with that. He sympathizes with our holy trials, when in the midst of trials we have not sinned, but are finding the strain to be a trial. If we had a testimony meeting, I’m sure that most of you in this audience could stand up, you Christian people, could stand up and give an experience in which you have been involved, in which this truth has been real for you. All testing is, ultimately, the same. Our Lord’s testings were not different. What was his testing? To do the will of God. That’s what you and I have to do the will of God. It may be in particular areas related to the weakness of the flesh, that we, particularly, have. Some of us have certain weaknesses, others do not have. But all of our testings, ultimately, and fundamentally, come to do the will of God. That’s it. To not turn aside from the will of God. So the testing that our Lord underwent is the same kind as our testing. It was to do the will of God. That’s what he talks about.

He says, “The things that I hear my Father saying, I say. The things that I do are the things that the Father tells me to do.” That’s the testing that you and I have; to do the things that the word of God says that are to characterize our lives. And then, of course, I’ve already said this that only the sinless one can know the full intensity of sin. So this marvelous text, then, gives us the encouragement of a great High Priest, who has suffered in temptation to turn from the will of God, and, therefore, he is able at our very point of testing to help us, to aid those who are being tempted.

Now, I’d like to just point to a couple of things in conclusion. In conclusion, the only thing we need is to know him and to trust him fully. His humanity assures us of his sympathy. His deity assures us of his strength, as the God-man, who has overcome, he is the great High Priest upon whom we can lean in every experience of life, business, family, personal, occupational, whatever. They can all be brought to him for they are, essentially, the same problem, to do the will of God. Every temptation is an opportunity for trusting and realizing the succor, the aid, the help of our great High Priest.

Now, I’d like to turn back to the passage in Matthew and just make a few points by way of illustration of it, because it’s a marvelous illustration of just what we are talking about. The Lord Jesus had just healed the five thousand. Dan has been going through the Gospel of Mark. I was not here when I believe he expounded the Markian account of this. So I’ll just go through it. I imagine that he said much of what I’m going to say. But here, the five thousand had been fed and in verse 22, Matthew says, in chapter 14, “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.”

Now, isn’t that interesting? Jesus made them go to the other side. Now, we believe, do we not, that he is the God-man. He is a divine person who possess a divine nature, of course, as well as the nature that he took to himself in the incarnation. But he made his disciples go. Storms? Storms come from God. Every storm, every experience, every test, every trial, comes through the hand of God to us. We talk about the sovereignty of God, don’t we? We believe he controls the circumstances of life, don’t we? Well, in the trials of life, remember that. Rely upon it. This has come from God.

Now, the Disciples are still laboring, of course, and our Lord goes up into the mountain. He goes up into the mountain to pray, and the poor disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee, and they discover that it’s not an easy little trip across. But they’re in the middle of the sea, and they are tossed by the waves for the wind is contrary to them. But it’s something that Jesus told them to do. And so, we note, that while they labor, he prays. What a beautiful picture of our Lord, our great High Priest. We are down here, he is at the right hand of the Father, praying. Marvelous picture. Just see that little lake and see the northern part of the lake, and the Lord up on the rise around the lake, and the disciples are out, working hard to get that boat across to the other side. Our Lord is on his knees before the Father, praying.

Now, of course, the storm has been going for some time, evidently, because the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves. The wind was contrary, and he comes to them. But when does he come? He waits until the fourth watch of the night, three in the morning to six in

the morning. Can you imagine that the Lord was sitting up on the side of the Sea of Galilee, smiling at them? No, I don’t really think so, except that if he were to think of what was going to result from this experience. But, they are laboring and he’s praying. And I surmise from this that it’s fair to say that his delays are not necessarily, denials. That seems to be evident from this experience. His delays are not necessarily denials. He waits that long because there was, within the divine-human mind, that intention on his part for them to learn through this experience. So when God doesn’t answer our prayers immediately, that doesn’t mean he’s not going to answer them. It may not be yet the time for him to come to our need, we may need some more of the testing.

And then when the Lord does come, isn’t it funny, verse 26, “When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear.” God’s answer and it frightened them. Isn’t that interesting? God’s answer frightening them. We’re not saying too much when we say that the Lord’s answer to us often frighten us. That’s why, often, we turn away from them, when he’s given us the answer. But we’ve turned away it and the answer keeps coming, but we are frightened by it. They were frightened by this. And our Lord spoke to them and said, “Be of good cheer. It is I; be not afraid.” And Peter, characteristically, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” And our Lord said, “Come.” And Peter got down out of the boat, and walked on the water to go to Jesus. That is just, every time I read that, after all these years, I still smile over it and just would love to know exactly how Peter felt when he was walking on the water. Very simple, if you don’t know much, I guess.

I remember, in one of my houses that I had, I had a swimming pool, and we had some little kids out to swim with their parents. And one of the little kids, it was the first time, I think, he had ever been around a pool. And the memory is a little hazy, I have it written down somewhere, and I’m not sure I’m repeating it exactly, but the point will be the same thing. Someone was in the water, just about four feet away, I think, a brother or a sister, and this little baby saw the brother or the sister there, could just walk, a toddler. And she or he, I can’t remember whether it was a she or he, probably a she, they have more faith than his. At any rate, she just stepped out to walk on that water



and began to sink. And the rest of us, around there, performed our Lord’s work, [laughter] and managed to get her up. But can you just imagine Peter walking on that water? I’ll enjoy this when I get to Matthew, reading through the Bible, in about a month.

So the solution to life’s riddles are found so plainly in verse 32. “And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.” Because the solutions to the riddles of life are all bound up in receiving the Lord Jesus into the boat of our lives. Contrary elements always yield to the divine presence and the one, who at the five thousand feeding, proved himself to be the Lord of the bread, now proves himself to be the Lord of the billows. That’s not original with me, incidentally. He can multiply the bread, he can mollify the waters. Those are within his powers. And then the result is in verse 33, “Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped him.” This is the highest function of the redeemed soul is to worship the Lord God. We are to worship him in spirit and in truth.

Get down upon the side of your bed or the chair or wherever you pray and worship him, worship him with the word of God. Take the promises of the word of God. Remind the Lord in heaven of the promises and how they are related to your particular life. Worship him. No life is rich if it’s not filled with worship. And, usually, among Christians, you can pick out those that have some life of worship from those who do not have any.

And then, finally, they worshiped him, saying, “Truly, you are the Son of God.” I think this is the first time that men called him or these men called him the Son of God. “You are truly the Son of God!”

That is the experience of the delivering power of our great High Priest. I hope that you, in your experience, know something of that, it’s the experience that’s thrilling. It’s part of being and enjoying what it is to be one “of the seed of Abraham.” A child of God. We are so blessed, to be able to call ourselves, children of God. May the Lord help us to take advantage of our blessings.

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

“Jesus—Wholly Sufficient in Life’s Trials” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for these wonderful words from the author of this epistle. We are grateful to Thee and for what Thou hast done through Him, to encourage us. Lord, may we not ever forget that we have a merciful and faithful High Priest at the right hand of the throne of God, who is constantly making intercession for us, even at this very moment. Enable us, Lord, to go with thy blessing.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.