



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 4:14–16

“Our High Priest’s Throne of Grace”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for another opportunity to study the Scriptures. We thank Thee for this great book, and we thank Thee for the truth that the author of it has so diligently set forth for us. Undoubtedly spending many, many hours, days, thinking through some of the things that he has written, in this marvelous treatise. We ask, again, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we look at the Scriptures. May also the things that we see be things that are useful in enabling us to be more submissive to Thee in our Christian lives and in the Christian service, which Thou hast given to us to carry out for Thee. We thank Thee for the triune God, for the Father who loved us and elected us, and for the Son who accomplished the atoning work for us, and for the Holy Spirit who, in harmony with the Father and the Son, has opened our hearts, regenerated us, brought us to the knowledge of Him and to the reception of eternal life. We thank Thee and praise Thee for these things and ask, Lord, for Thy presence with us in this meeting.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] We’re turning to Hebrews chapter 4 in verse 14 through verse 16, tonight, and our subject is, “Our High Priest’s Throne of Grace.” And will you listen as I read verse 14 through verse 16.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

What is it that moves God? That gives support for daily burdens? That gives songs in the difficult nights that many of us, who have had a few years under our belts have experienced? That fortifies the soul for an agony, perhaps not as strong as Gethsemane, but, nevertheless an agony? What is the act that saves us from falling?

Well, James tells us that prayer could qualify. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man prevails. And our author in introducing us to the subject of the great high priest, inevitably, brings to our minds at least, our great High Priest who lives at the right hand of the majesty on high and continues to pray for us. That’s the word that comes before us here as we come to the third and most important of the contrasts in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

We’ve looked at the contrast between the Son of God and the angels in chapter 1 and chapter 2. And then, in chapter 3, we looked at the contrast between Moses and the Son. We, of course, stopped for two periods or portions of admonition in chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 4 and then in chapter 3, verse 7 through chapter 4 in verse 13. So we’ve had these two great contrasts, Christ and the angels and Christ and Moses.

Now, here at verse 14, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” Here we have the beginning of the lengthiest of the treatises. In fact, it can be said the primary reason that he wrote his epistle, to unfold and expatiate upon the contrast between Israel’s high priest, Aaron, and our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son is greater than the messengers of the law, he’s greater than the angels, greater than the messengers of the law, the

angels. Greater, also, than the mediator of the law. And, now, finally, he is even greater than the administrator of the law, the priestly line, signified by Aaron, the High Priest.

This is the heart of his argument because he conceived of salvation as involving priesthood, covenant, and then sacrifices. Just keep those three terms in mind and it will help you in reading through the epistle. Priesthood, covenant and in the covenant of course, the promises for they are part of the covenant, priesthood, covenant and sacrifices.

And what he now will show in this third, long section, which does not end until chapter 10, verse 18 at the earliest. Some even like to trace this contrast on to chapter 12 in verse 29. The heart of it is our author showing us that Christianity has a better high priest, a better covenant and a better sacrifice. And that’s the reason why in chapter 2, he talked about “so great salvation.”

So we want to take a look at it, and this simple section that begins; it contains an exhortation to perseverance, and then an argument, short one, for perseverance. And then a short, logical implication from the possessions that we have, before he launches into, well, a more disciplined treatment of the priesthood. And, he will talk in chapter 5 about the requirements of the priesthood and how the Lord Jesus Christ meets those requirements.

And now, the exhortation. “Seeing then.” Now, that word, translated “then” in my text is an inferential particle that may be rendered in your text “therefore” because we are seeing introduced by the author an inference from the preceding. “Seeing therefore that we have a great high priest.” That takes us back to this lengthy section in which he has given admonition to them by turning to the Old Testament and treating the children of Israel, coming to Meribah and places like that and failing. So what he wants to show us, right here in the beginning, is that the priest can enable us to hold fast to our faith and, further, that if we hold fast to our faith, we will resist the falls that took place at places like Meribah, about which he has just been writing. So “Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” Do not fall as Israel did.

Now, what he is interested in, of course, is a kind of faith, if James, James were by, he would turn to James and say, “James, what I’m talking about is the kind of faith you talked about when you talked about a faith that works.” He’s interested in that kind of faith, a faith that endures. So he talks about holding fast “our confession.”

Peter Lombard once described this as “The faith of the heart together with the confession of the mouth, so that faith is present, also, in the mouth.” A very interesting expression. That this kind of faith is the faith of the heart together with the confession of the mouth, so that the faith is present in the mouth. In other words, it’s not simply word, but it’s a word or words that come from a belief of the heart, what Paul talks about in Romans chapter 10.

Now, often, we miss the little words and the little words are really often so big. “Seeing then we have.” You notice what he says? “Seeing then we have.” Now, suppose I had simply read this, “Seeing then there is a great high priest who has passed through the heaven and is now at the right hand of the throne of God.” What’s the difference? Well, perhaps, the “there is” could be construed to mean something of the same thing. But, obviously, the author is impressed with the possession itself, and he’s interested in us realizing that it’s something that “we have.” It’s not something that is out there, that is really there. But, it’s something that “we,” that is we who have made confession of our faith, something that “we have.” So it’s not “Seeing then there is a great high priest who has passed through the heavens,” but “Seeing then that we have it.” Blessings are fully realized and appreciated only if we have them, not if they just simply exist. It’s very important that we have them, that we really have them as a personal possession. And that is what he’s interested in, that we not simply talk about a priest existing, a great priest existing, one who’s at the right hand of the throne of God, but he wants us to grasp the importance of knowing that “he” is ours, our great high priest. And, of course, the throne of grace is our High Priest’s throne of grace.

So a “great high priest.” Would that have struck a chord with Israel? Well, they had lots of high priests, of course, one following after another. Later on, the author in chapter 7 will remind his readers that they had one following another, because they were mortal, and one would be succeeded by

another mortal priest. So, why underline “high priest.” Well, he’s added the adjective “great.” So we could say Israel had a high priest. They had a high priest almost at every point of their history. They don’t have one now because they don’t know who would qualify at the present time after things happened around the time of our Lord, all of that is lost and all of the genealogical grounds for the establishment of a priest is now no longer Israel’s. Actually, it’s found in the word of God, because we know from the genealogies of the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew, that the only one who has the right to sit upon the throne is our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Old Testament tells us he is a king-priest, the son of David. So Israel had many priests but they never had a “great” high priest. We have a great High Priest; he is, absolutely, unique.

Now, think for a moment, how important that is. We have a great high priest. Obviously, he is in his mind thinking about Israel and the high priests that they had and, what characterized those high priests? Now, he is particularly caught up in this book with the service on the Day of Atonement. He will lay great stress on that. He will make other references to other ceremonies, but the one that is obviously in his mind, which he wants to emphasize, and which he wants to use for his typical teaching, his illustrative teaching, is the great Day of Atonement.

Now, you know that the priests carried out their ministry with the names of the Tribes of Israel upon their breast and on their shoulders. If you’re reading through the Bible, and if you’re now into Leviticus, well, you know this, of course. And so you know that when they carried out their ministry, they carried it out as representatives of a particular people. When they offered the sacrifices they did not offer them for the Assyrians. They didn’t offer them for the Greeks. They didn’t carry on their work for the Romans. They didn’t carry on their work for anyone but the Twelve Tribes of Israel. So when the high priest carried out his ministry, he had the names of the children of Israel upon his breast, upon his shoulders, to underline the love for God for his people, and the strength of God, because the shoulder as you read again in reading through the Old Testament, you read the shoulder is the place of strength. So those priests, typically, let Israel know that the ministry of the Levitical cultus was for the people of Israel. They were the people of God.

Now, when we think of our great High Priest, we think of him, also, as our great representative and our names, the names of his elect people, are really upon his heart and really upon his shoulder, because he is the fulfillment of the typical illustrations from the Old Testament. So that means that he has our names upon his breast, upon his shoulders, in covenantal love. That is, guaranteed by the promises of the word of God. What an incentive to endurance for those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest,” with our names upon his breast and upon his shoulders, “let’s hold fast our confession.” Those are magnificent statements, aren’t they? I give him A+ for those. And they’re easy to understand, too. They’re all little words, really. “We have,” “who has passed through the heavens.”

Well, “passed through the heavens” does that mean that he’s no longer ours? No, no. He has our names upon his breast and just as Aaron carried the names of the children of Israel into the holiest of all, so the Lord Jesus has passed through the heavens, to the right hand of the Majesty on High, and he still has our names upon his breast and upon his shoulders. Our High Priest! Think of it! This motley crowd of people! Some of you are surprised? Well, that’s what we are, really. The world looks at us that way, don’t they? But our names upon the breast and shoulders, typically, of our great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Throne of God, at this very moment. Still ours, though there.

Now, that tells us a great deal about true worship, too, doesn’t it? As a matter of fact, true worship is not now associated with a building. True worship is not associated with an earthly sanctuary. True worship is not associated with a priest down here or the clergy; someone called the reverend doctor. True worship is our worship in spirit and truth of our Triune God in Heaven. Consequently, when we think of worship, we don’t fasten our attention upon priestly dress, clergy collars.

I read a little article in the *Banner of Truth* magazine. It’s right here. And one of the men in England is commenting upon the fact that the Anglicans gave official permission for the women now to be priests. They had been able to serve as deacons, but not as priests, which means, now, that

they can carry out the services of communion, for example, or baptism, or whatever the case may be. Well, the picture that was given on the front of it was a picture of a lot of men. Now, I guess that was on purpose to let us know that men had, largely, been in control of the Anglican Church. But a lot of these fellows have a strange kind of collar on. Have you noticed it? No tie. Just like this. Someone has said that is a “slipped halo.” [Laughter]

Well, I think, you can see what I am driving at is this. There is no such thing in the word of God, of having different kind of clothes, now, if you are a minister of the word of God. That’s something derived from the Old Testament. Various things derived from the Old Testament; sanctuary. Clothes, incense, candles, various other ways by which one hopes to spruce up a service, which has become dead because the living vitality of the personal worship of the Lord Jesus Christ has been lost. The early Church met and they met Sunday by Sunday and they sat around and they broke bread and they drank a glass of wine. So far as we can tell, that was all that took place in the meeting of the church. They didn’t have special dresses. As a matter of fact, they didn’t have any reverends. They had individuals who had certain gifts. There may have been an evangelist present or a pastor-teacher present or a teacher present. But they were just one of the flock and they may have, from time to time, carried out their ministry. But no one was called the reverend doctor. There is nothing in the New Testament beginning at the Gospel of Matthew and reading through the New Testament and you will not find one thing about the office of pastor, as an individual who is the organizational head of a local church. You’ll not find it.

I’m reading through, I’m in Mark now, so I’ll look again and see if I can find it. But I anticipate I am not going to find it at all because I’ve been through the New Testament enough to know it’s not there.

Why is it then that the people of God keep talking as if those things were biblical things? They talk, even true believing people, “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Ashkelon,” some who regularly attend Believers Chapel, they talk in the language of those churches. Isn’t that interesting? They use those expressions. It’s as if I ask or you ask, “Oh well, it’s not true, we use the language.”

We do not use the language of the world. We don’t use the language of that which is contrary to the Scriptures, if we hope to continue to grow in the knowledge of the word of God and of the things that are in the Bible. So why did I get off on that? Because there is little worship carried on in our local churches other than the simple worship of the preaching of the word of God, the observance of the ordinances and that is it. That’s it.

So, “We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” How would you feel if Dan Duncan arrived Sunday morning, mounted up here and got behind the pulpit, with a slipped halo? [Laughter] You wouldn’t like that would you? I hope you wouldn’t, because there is no such thing as that. Furthermore, there is no special ritual. There is no special liturgy. Now, I’ll tell you why I’m saying this, it’s because the Evangelical Church, in many places, is caught up with just this very thing. Their churches are not very alive. Some of them are dead. And they think that the way to capture the life of the church, again, is through liturgy; some through music but some through liturgy, through entertainment. And so, consequently, there are even Evangelicals that are going back to Canterbury, to the Anglican Church, for that reason.

Now, there are many things that are good about a number of men who are in the Anglican Church. We know a number of good Anglican men. Jim Packer is one of those men and an outstanding man. But when we have lost the vitality of the Christian faith and seek to gain it by liturgy or ritual, we’re going precisely opposite way we ought to go. We need to get down upon our knees and call upon our great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens and ask Him to restore the life and vitality of the personal faith in Christ that, at one time, we had. I don’t say that it’s impossible or wrong to do some of those things. You’re free to do a number of the things perhaps, but would you do it? Well, I won’t answer that question.

Notice what he says, “Seeing then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” What a magnificent statement. Jesus. What is the name? What does it mean? “Thou shall call his name, Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” And so what does it stress? This is his birth name; this is the name that Mary used when she called him, no



doubt, except that she probably called him, Joshua, because Jesus is the Greek name for Joshua; so Joshua or Jesus the Greek name. The name that marks him out as one of us, one of us, fully human, apart from sin, completely human, apart from sin. But more fundamentally, it’s the name of the one who accomplished the first and necessary work of priesthood. What is it? The sacrifice. It was Jesus who made the sacrifice. It was Jesus who accomplished the atonement. This is Jesus of Nazareth, was above his cross. So it’s the name that stresses his humanity but it’s the name also that marks him out as the one who offered the priestly sacrifice. Priests, remember, deal in sacrifices. And so this name stresses that, his birth name. But Son of God that marks him out as the eternal one, the second person of the eternal Trinity. So Jesus the Son of God, the two natures suggesting his sympathy and at the same time his power. The same things stressed by the names upon the high priest’s breast and on his shoulders expressed by this. One name, the name Jesus the Son of God.

Mr. Spurgeon has an interesting comment. I’m not sure I can find it, where he talks about this. I may have to put on my glasses to find it and that’s an acknowledgment of weakness, isn’t it? But, anyway, he says something to the effect that this name is “as glorious in its sympathy as it is in its deity,” or something like that.

But also stressed by this is the fact when we say Jesus the Son of God, we are marking out that from which our Lord must come; that is from Heaven itself in order to accomplish the saving work by which he might bring his people back into the presence of God. So, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” Incidentally, “passed through the heavens” is designed to contrast with those earthly priests who went into that little tabernacle and carried out their ministry in the Levitical cultus. But our priest has “passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.”

All right, verse 15 then argues for perseverance.

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

His transcendence is not opposed to his perfect sympathy with us. Now, the Authorized Version says something like this, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with our weakness.” And I like that because the Greek word means “to have a fellow feeling with.” And so our great High Priest is one who has a fellow feeling with those who have weaknesses.

Now, think of the weakness of our Lord. He did have weaknesses. He grew tired. He had to deal with people such as you and me. To carry out the kind of work that he did was physically debilitating. If you will look at what our Lord did, just physically, in his three years of ministry, you would know that he had a very strong physique to carry that out. But he had to contend with the weaknesses that belong to humanity, apart from sin. And so he had a fellow feeling with. He was touched with, not by, but touched with our weaknesses. “We do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with our weaknesses.” He’s not an individual who stands off and looks at someone who is suffering and says, “I’m sorry for him.” But he enters into it. It’s the difference between a person who expresses sympathy for someone’s troubles but who does not have the depth of sympathy to actually participate in the fellow suffering of someone else.

I wish I was born with that. I was not born with that. I would like to have been born with that kind of feeling, that kind of sympathy, to not simply say, “I’m sorry,” but to really suffer with that person. That’s what our text says. That he is an individual who, he’s not an individual who cannot be touched with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, apart from sin.

There are individuals, I referred to this several weeks back maybe five or six weeks back, who have tried to make the point that it was necessary for the Lord Jesus to sin in order to have true experience of our experiences. One of those men is George Wesley Buchanan who, twenty years ago, wrote what is still recognized as one of the important commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews; professor of New Testament at Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C., obviously, a Methodist. Now, this is what Dr. Buchanan says about our Lord and sin. “How could Jesus, in any sense, save sinners if he had not fully shared himself, shared himself, in the human condition,

including actual participation in the experience of sinning?” So in other words, in order to have true sympathy one must sin too. Another of the commentaries appealing to chapter 5 in verse 8, where we read that, “Though a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things that He suffered,” makes much the same thing, much the same kind of comment.

Now, I want to say a word or two about that because, I think, it’s very important for us to understand this. And I’ve said something about it before but maybe it escaped you at the time. Is it necessary for the Lord Jesus to sin in order to be sympathetic with us? Well, the first question I’d like to ask you is a question Mr. Spurgeon asks. “Brother, do you wish that your Lord had become a sinner, like you? Is that what you wish?” Well, you would say, “No, no! I don’t want that.” “But yet, you have just said, in order for Him to sympathize with us, Dr. Buchanan, he must sin. He must actually take part in our sin.” What kind of thing does sin produce in a man’s life? I know that many of you in this room have seen individuals who have made a profession of faith, and then they departed from their profession of faith and began, openly, sometimes, to live a life of sin. What happens to them? What happens to them? You know what happens to them, if you have any sensibilities at all, you know that sin hardens. You can see it in illustrations of individuals, Christians you’ve known. They’ve departed and now they’re living out of communion with the Lord that they professed, and their life is spiritually a hardening life, as long as they persist in that sin. Would you like to have our Lord as a sinner? Subject to the effects of sin, which is hardening?

What is sympathy with sin? Well, Mr. Spurgeon says, “Sympathy in sin is conspiracy in crime.” So when we say that our Lord must sin in order to sympathize with us, are we offering the suggestion that he should sin? That he, therefore, will not be hardened and that he will not have any conspiracy, part in the conspiracy of sin against the Lord God in Heaven. That’s so foolish!

Look, as I said, back when we were dealing with chapter 2, verse 17 and 18, it is the man who is sinless, having lived in our midst, who best understands the strength of temptation to sin. Please remember that. When often churches march a man up, put him behind the pulpit and say, “This man was in prison for this, that or the other, and now we should listen to him, because he’s

been converted.” Well, it’s nice to be converted, but if we glorify the man’s sin, what are we doing? Look, it’s the person who has passed the supreme test who best understands what it is when we are tested because he’s been there at that particular place. And not only has he been there at that particular place and may have a fellow feeling with us, right there, but he has overcome and is able by his strong arm to deliver us, when we turn to him. How marvelous to have a great High Priest, who truly has a fellow feeling with us. The fellow feeling is in the strength of temptation. We fall out, he never fell out. And so he knows precisely what you, you Christians, have undergone.

So you’ve lost a loved one. Perhaps a husband or a wife. The bed at home is empty. And you must get in it. You can be absolutely certain that no matter what the experience is, our Lord Jesus Christ has a fellow feeling with you in it and, furthermore, knows how to give you the sense of his presence and victory in it. Turn to Him. Look to Him. “For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to have a fellow feeling with us in our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are.”

Oh, Dr. Buchanan, how wrong you are when you suggest that a man who sins is the sympathetic person. And, incidentally, the things in a Christian life this principle holds true. It’s not the Christian who has been sinning who is best sympathetic, best able to sympathize with you, it’s the Christians who have passed that test who are best able to understand your experiences.

So “Yet without sin.” That could be understood in two ways. That could be understood that our Lord came and did not sin; that is, he was tested and he did not sin. It can also be understood as, he was tested in all points like as we are, yet the sin question was not specifically there because he did not have a sin nature.

Later on in chapter 9 in verse 28, we read a text that bears on this point. I won’t try to solve it now. We don’t have time to do it. But, chapter 9, verse 28 says, “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” It would seem to suggest, at least, that it is a limitation in the testing. So our Lord is tested in all points as we are, apart from sin.

And, finally, we read, “Let us therefore,” again, the same word that we had in verse 14. My text translates it, “Then,” in verse 14, “Therefore” now. “Let us then,” or “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Since we have Him, let us use him, that’s as simple as it is. And then, furthermore, let us come boldly. Reverently, submissively, because of the grace that is identified with that throne, that we may receive grace and mercy, or mercy, obtain mercy and find grace for help in time of need.

Mercy and grace? The throne is called a “throne of grace.” Well, suppose it had been called, “the throne of Majesty,” because we do read in the first chapter that our Lord has taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Later on, that word will also be used. But here, it’s not, what Calvin called, “Naked majesty,” because that might confound you a bit. To think, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of Divine Majesty.” Naked majesty! If you understand yourself, as you really are, before the Lord God, a rebellious sinner! That’s where, that’s something you want to avoid, isn’t it? The thing that you are liable to do as a sinner is to shun entrance into the presence of the Lord. And so this is a throne of grace. It’s a throne established by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in dying for us.

Now, I want to come to conclusion but I want to come to conclusion in a slightly different way tonight. So to answer my question, what is the word that moves God? Well, really, in one sense, we could say, it is prayer, the appeal to the Lord God. But what I’d like for you to do now, we’re going to turn back to a passage in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 15. At the Lord’s Table the other night, I made reference to this, but only to one of the verses in it and I’d like to spend just a few moments on it, in the fifteen minutes that we have for the remainder of the class. It’s the story of our Lord and the Syrophenician woman.

Now, there is a lot of what may be called dispensational truth here. You know, it’s possible for a person who is a covenantal theologian to use the term dispensation. Did you know that? And they use it with a slightly different sense. But they use the term dispensation. As a matter of fact, covenant theologians speak of dispensations of the covenant of grace. Four of them have been

identified. So we’re not surprised then for the use of the term, dispensation. One must ask, “What do you mean by your use of that term?” But, now, we read in verse 21, these words.

“Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. My daughter is severely demon possessed.”

Now, you would think, would you not, if you had not read this account, you would think that immediately our Lord would do something about it, wouldn’t you? Isn’t it a surprise to you that he acts as he does? She has cried out to him saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. My daughter is severely demon possessed.” I’ve just said that our Lord Jesus is one who has a fellow feeling with us, sympathetic, a great High Priest, has our names upon his heart and upon his shoulders. And so how does he respond to the Syrophoenician woman? Silence! Silence!

“But He answered her not a word.”

Now, Samuel Rutherford has a little comment in one of his sermons on this point and he says, “He doesn’t say,” Matthew doesn’t say, “He heard not a word.” But, “He answered not a word.” He heard her, but he didn’t respond. Why? Well, let’s see.

“The disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away.’”

That is, do what she wants to do. She’s crying out, she crying, do something about her. Send her away. Give her daughter healing or something. Must be, maybe what they had in mind. I’m not sure.

“But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”

Someone has said that when our Lord is silent, it was the silence of higher thoughts. I’m sure there was something of this. He was thinking and knowing the time would come, when there would be someone outside the land that he would have to teach what God was trying to do. To reach Israel and through Israel reach the nations. So.

“‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ She came and worshiped Him saying, ‘Lord, help me!’”

Help me! Surely, our Lord will respond to that. “Lord, help me!” What greater appeal and prayer could you offer than “Lord, help me?” Our Lord says.

“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

What a rebuff. Not good to take the children’s bread and to throw it to the little dogs. What would you have done there? You would have turned and you would have gone back to the land of Tyre and Sidon, and you would have said that that fellow over there, that they’re talking about, who’s doing such great things is just like Jimmy Swaggart and the rest of those fellows.

Last night, I happened to open up in my files by accident, and I had a file that had letters in it and I just opened it up to look and there was a three page letter from a man in Jasper, Alabama. It was written in nineteen eighty. I don’t know what I responded to him, but I have written across it, answered in ninety eighty. I’ve forgotten the dates. But I re-read the letter. It was very interesting. It’s the story of a man who was very obviously not well educated. Very poor. Had several children. And he was trying to find a church in which he could be reasonably happy in Jasper, Alabama, the hometown of my grandmother. I knew the town very well. He went to the First Baptist Church and

he said, “When I walked out and shook the pastor’s hand, it was obvious that he hoped that [it] would be the last time he would see my face.” And then he mentioned several other things that I remember. And mentioned radio preachers, too. The reason he got my name was because in those days we were on the radio in Birmingham. And so he had written me for that reason. I can just imagine someone would have a very good reason for disliking the Lord Jesus Christ and saying some sad word about him, if he’d turned away right at that point.

“‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little doggies.’ She said, ‘Yes, Lord.’”

Isn’t that interesting? “Truth Lord,” how about that? How about the fact that the Bible teaches there is such a thing as the doctrine of election, and that some people are chosen out of the mass, and others are passed by. What about that? “Truth Lord,” “Truth Lord.” Because, you see, obviously, she has some understanding that the God that the Lord Jesus is serving is a special God for those people who are in the land of the chosen people. “Truth Lord,” my text has simply, “Yes, Lord,” but I believe the Authorized Version has “Truth Lord.”

“Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

She knew there was such a thing as election, but she knew also there was such a thing as an opening for others who were not yet among that elect crowd. So you can picture the little house and the table, your house too if you’ve got a dog, ’cause a number of you feed your dog underneath. I want to say, don’t invite me over because I despise that. [Laughter] I despise seeing somebody do that, take something off the table and feed their dog, right there. Some of your faces are turning red. But anyway and some of you are punching each other, too. [More laughter] Well, anyway, that was a custom. I guess you can answer me and say, “It’s biblical, isn’t it?” Okay. [More laughter]



“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ ‘Yes, Lord’ or ‘Truth Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’”

And she understands where she, as a Gentile, stands with reference to the program of God. The plan is for Israel. Our Lord had told the Twelve, remember, “Go not to the Gentiles. Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” So the little doggies eat the crumbs. There is a place for them. The Abrahamic promise is given to Abraham had that last line—so important. “Abraham, I’m going to give you a land, I’m going to give you posterity, a seed, and through that seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed, ultimately.” But, there is a divine order in God’s working. When she said that.

“The Lord Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith. Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”

Do you know, there are only two people to whom he ever said that? “Great is your faith;” the Centurion and this woman. “O woman, great is your faith!” So acknowledging herself as a doggie, yet open for membership in the family of the blessed, she wins out by, I couldn’t help but say this, by dogged faith. [Laughter] I could not help but say that. That had to be said. Now, forgive me. But she wins out by the kind of perseverance and faith that our author is talking about, just that kind of faith. But let me also point one other thing. It is obvious God is not bound to save man. “He doesn’t throw grace,” someone has said, “at everybody.” We’ve lost that in our society. We have the idea in our Christianized society but not Christian society, that everybody will ultimately find his way into the presence of God. Everybody is chosen. Everybody belongs to the heavenly body. But look, God does not have to save one soul, so far as the merits of each individual is concerned. Don’t forget that. And so here, Campbell Morgan has a nice sentence. He says,

“Against prejudice, she came; against silence, she persevered. Against exclusion, she proceeded. Against rebuff, she won.” And, Luther said something like, “She flung the sack of promises at His feet, and He couldn’t step over them.” So fundamentally, what she did was take Him at His word.

I spoke to the ladies here on, yesterday, yesterday morning, on winning souls. And used chapter 5 of Luke when the apostles had been out fishing all night, caught nothing, and our Lord Jesus asked them to launch out into the lake, the worst time to fish, in the heat of the day. They’d already fished for hours, caught nothing. The fish were down at the bottom, obviously. They launched out, Peter said, “Lord, nevertheless, at your word, we’ll go fishing.” And, of course, they had the marvelous catch. So she took him at his word, and she came. And, I think, there is no better illustration of what we may do with our great High Priest who’s passed through the heavens to the right hand of the throne of God.

So in the words of our author in chapter 4 in verse 14, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us [go on] holding fast our confession.” Take him at his word. Bring your trials to him, whatever they are. Bring your problems to him. Bring your needs to him, constantly. You have someone who is a fellow feeling with you and has the power to do all that you need.

Of course, the fundamental question is our relationship to the Lord? Those who do not know him don’t have this great High Priest, of course. It is we, who have believed in him, who do have. And so we invite you, I invite you, to come to Him. Touch the hem of his garment for life, as they did in his ministry when he was here. I read something long time ago that touched me very much. A person made reference to that and then he said to the audience, “Perhaps, you tell me you don’t know how to touch his garment. Well, tell him and that will touch him.”

So turn to him. And as a believer, most of you are believers in this room; don’t pass up the opportunity to constantly use your great High Priest, as he wants to be used, by coming to him, bringing your trials to him, trusting in him, in the experiences of life. You need a job? You have a

financial problem? You have personal problems? Deaths, even? Difficulties of many types and kinds?

We have a great High Priest, who sympathizes with our weakness, one who in all points tempted as we are, yet without sins, let us, therefore, come boldly to that gracious throne that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The Greek text says, “in well-timed need,” or something like that. “For well-timed need.” That’s what we have.

Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the Scriptures and for the greatness of the Son of God, our great High Priest. And, Lord, as we continue to study what it means to have such a great High Priest, give us light, encouragement, and motivation, to come as priests to our great High Priest; for our needs, our family needs, the needs of our friends, the needs of our church.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.