



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 14:25-31

“Peace!”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For our Scripture reading this morning, we are turning to John chapter 14 and verse 25 through verse 31 which is the continuation of our exposition of our Lord’s Upper Room Discourse in the Gospel of John. And just again by way of review since I look out over the audience and notice some who are not regular in the Chapel and may be visiting, we are in the Upper Room Discourse in which our Lord is giving the eleven apostles instructions with regard to the future since it will not be long when he will not be with them physically. These are words of preparation in order that they will be able, when he is gone to lay hold of them and thus be able to carry on their ministry effectively through the coming ministry of the Holy Spirit. Verse 25 of John 14,

“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”

(That clause, we will talk about in a moment, but as you probably can guess if you are a Christian and believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, which is one of the fundamental Christian doctrines, you will recognize of course on the surface, these words appear to raise a question about the doctrine of the Trinity that is that there is one God who subsists in three persons and these three persons are co-equal and co-eternal. In the light of that, how could Jesus say, the Father is greater than I? It’s not surprising that the Arians in made a great deal over this text, seeking to show by it that Jesus was not God, but was a created being and although on a little higher plane than men, and perhaps something like an angelic being at least in stature, but still not the eternal Son. They thought this was one of their planks for their position. Later on in the 16th Century and 17th Century, the Socinians who also denied the deity of Christ made a lot over this clause also: my Father is greater than I. We will in a few moments say something about it when we come to it in the exposition of the text. Continuing with verse 29,)

“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

One can tell from those last words incidentally at this point began to leave the upper room where they were observing the last Passover and the first Lord’s Supper, making their way out ultimately to the place where the Lord Jesus would enter into the trial of Gethsemane. May the Lord bless this reading of his word; let us bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we come to Thee through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and we thank Thee for the access that we have through the eternal Son. And we praise Thee for our great Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We rejoice in the oneness of our

God and also in the fact that our God is a Triune God. And we thank Thee that we are able to come to Thee Father, through the Son who has accomplished the atoning work by virtue of the blood of the cross, and may address Thee as our Father, in the Holy Spirit. We rejoice in all of the blessings of life which Thou hast poured out upon us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father we ask that if there should be some in this meeting who have not yet given themselves to Thee through Christ, trusting in him and his finished work, that today may be the day when they do turn, giving Thee thanks for the blood that was shed and the forgiveness of sins that is offered through him.

We thank Thee Lord for the day in which we live, the day in which Thou has placed us, and for the opportunities that exist in it to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we would particularly pray for our country, asking Thy blessing Lord upon our president and all who are associated with him in government, for our state, for our city and local government. We remember the word of God gives us exhortation to pray for those who are in authority, we bring them to Thee. We remember that though many may not even realize it, they are ministers of God as the apostle says, men who in the providence of God have a place of responsibility in the community in order that we may enjoy the things that we do enjoy as citizens of our country and state and city. We would particularly remember these that are mentioned in the calendar of concern. Some who are sick, some bereaved, some with various types of problems, but very real and very significant and difficult, we bring them all to Thee Lord and we pray that Thou will minister to each as each has need.

We thank Thee for this day of ministry and we ask Lord Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word over the radio and through the publications ministry and through the tapes and through the Bible classes and other special ministries from the Chapel. We're grateful to Thee Lord that Thou hast given an outreach not only in this country but to the other continents by virtue of the tape ministry and publication ministries. And we pray Thy blessing upon them. We thank Thee for those who write us and tell us that they have responded in various ways to the ministry.

We pray for our elders, and our deacons and ask Lord that Thou would give them guidance and direction as they seek to have the oversight in our midst. And enable us as a congregation to serve Thee acceptably. Most of all, we give Thee thanks for the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ for the relationship that we enjoy and for all of the wonderful adequacy of the provision of God wrought for us by Christ our Savior. In whose name we pray. Amen.

[Message] From the bulletin you will notice that the subject for this morning as we continue the exposition of the Gospel of John and specifically the Upper Room Discourse is one word, “Peace!” In this section, the Lord gives us three marvelous promises. One of them is new, and two are old so far as the Upper Room Discourse is concerned. For example, he promises again that he will, when he ascends to the Father’s right hand give the comforter, the Holy Spirit. He also promises that he’s going away but yet he will not go away in the spiritual sense, but will come again unto them. But there is the new promise of peace, and that is a remarkable promise, and a remarkably wonderful promise for us to have. And we want to center some of our attention upon it.

This is really something like a priceless last will and testament of our Lord, for he phrases it almost in those ways, for he says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” What is remarkable about this of course is that the Lord Jesus was one of the poorest of men and yet he’s left a priceless bequest for us. Whittier once wrote, “Take from our souls the strain and stress and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of Thy peace.” Well, I think we all at one time or another if we have by grace been brought to know the Lord Jesus as Savior prayed something like that. What burdens men do have. And at particular times while they may vary, they are always heavy. Today we have many of the same old burdens. Many of us feel we are poorer than we ought to be or poorer than we need to be. We have need of money, many have physical problems, many have parental problems, there area a number who are lonely and do not know how to solve the problem of loneliness. Some are ill or sick, and then we all are getting older and when we do become aged, then we have a special set of problems, and the promises of our Lord are addressed to them. And today

and as we look out in our society, there are many other kinds of problems which you know as well or better than I.

What we want of course is not a sheltered placidity which is some people’s sense of the peace of God, we do not want to be emotionless like the stoics, their kind of peace is not truly the kind of peace of which our Lord Jesus speaks. What he says is that his peace is his own special peace. In fact in verse 27 when he says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace,” he lays a great deal of stress on the word my. In fact in the Greek text at this point, the adjective is in a certain position that lays stress upon the fact that it is his special peace. It is peace that is I mean my peace, the kind of peace that I enjoy. Well when you look at our Lord’s peace, you have a good idea of the kind of peace that he’s speaking about and it certainly is not the peace of a sheltered placidity, for the Lord Jesus lived no sheltered life. And he enjoyed all of the difficulties and trials that we enjoy, except to a greater degree, because he did not fall under them, and therefore the strain of the tests were always severer in his case.

We of course do not know really the strength of a test for we fail so quickly. And as the stress becomes stronger and stronger and more and more intense, the Lord Jesus Christ’s faithfulness remains, and therefore, he knows the stress of testing and the strain of temptation in a way that you and I will never know. That’s why he could be sympathetic with us as our great high priest. Often when we don’t really think through spiritual things, we think that because the Lord Jesus was the sinless Son of God, he doesn’t know the problems that we know and therefore how can he possibly be in sympathy with us and empathize with us in our trials? Ah, it’s just the opposite, because he is the sinless Son of God, he knows the strength of temptation and the greatness of trial, far more than you or I ever know it. Beyond anything that we ever experienced, he dwelt in areas that we will never really know, and furthermore, he overcame. And because he overcame he’s able to give us the victory as we lean upon him. So this is a great promise, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”

But it's also garrisoned about by two other promises and we want to take a look at them as well. In the 25th verse as he continues his discourse to the eleven, Judas now you remember is gone; here we have the eleven believing apostles. He will say in a moment, “You're clean through the word that I have spoken unto you.” “These things have I spoken unto you being yet present with you, but the comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” So the Holy Spirit who is called the Comforter, that is the one called alongside to help, *paracletas*, the Greek word that is used here is a combination of roots, one of which means to call, one is the preposition *para* which means alongside, so that the comforter is one called alongside. There are other senses that the word has by usage, but essentially it means someone who comforts, someone who encourages, someone who even exhorts.

And so he is the comforter, he is another comforter, for Jesus has said just previously that he will “pray the Father and he will give you another comforter.” So we have two comforters, we have one who will come to dwell within our hearts. When we believe in Jesus Christ we all have the presence of the Holy Spirit within. And then we have another comforter at the right hand of the Father, the Lord Jesus. So the comforter within and the comforter above, we certainly have all of the encouragement and strengthening and admonition that is necessary to please the Lord in our lives.

Now the comforter is sent by the Lord to teach the apostles all things. That is there is going to be a clarity in the divine revelation from the hands of the eleven. They will teach, he will be teaching them and they will teach in the authority of the Holy Spirit. What we have in the New Testament is essentially the teaching of the apostles. Apostolic doctrine, it is doctrine upon which we can rely, it is the teaching of the Holy Spirit ultimately. So the Lord promises that there will be a clarity of divine revelation and then also a clarity in the illumination of the divine revelation as the spirit instructs us in that which he has brought to our attention through the apostles. Further he says he will bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Occasionally in theological seminary students have asked questions like, “How is it possible for an old man like

John” who may well have been ninety years of age when he wrote his literature, “How is it possible for an old man like that to remember the precise words that the Lord Jesus spoke?”

There’s an interesting story that Earling Olsen tells in his commentary on the gospel of John. Mr. Olsen was a business man, he was actually a Wall Street investment banker and had his own firm, but at the same time he was a student of the word of God and wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John and wrote other commentaries as well. He was a friend of Lewis Sperry Chafer who was the president and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary and was on the board of that institution at one time. Mr. Olsen was also a friend of Donald Grey Barnhouse’s, the man who was responsible for my conversion. And he was preaching in the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia once, and he preached on this particular passage in which the text says that the Holy Spirit when he comes will bring all things to your remembrance and then a year later he came back to preach in that church, a church in which I have often spoken through the years.

And when he returned he said a young man came up to him who had been a student in a theological seminary of liberal bent. And he said, “Mr. Olsen, I don’t know whether you remember it or not, but last year when you were here you commented upon this text that the Holy Spirit when he comes Jesus said would bring all things to the remembrance of the apostles.” He said, “My seminary professor who was teaching me New Testament thought it was ridiculous to even think that the Apostle John could remember the things that Jesus had said so many years before, and record them in his gospel.” But then he said, and these are the words that Mr. Olsen prints in his commentary, “But oh I felt like shouting for joy when you dispelled the theory that it was not John’s memory but rather that it was the Holy Spirit’s own memory bringing back to John word for word what the Lord Jesus had to say.” Well it is a testimony of course to the fact that the apostle when he wrote the Gospel of John was aided by the Holy Spirit in the writing of it and what we have here is the word of God from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it’s a marvelous thing to realize that we have been given an inspired interpreter of the word, one who was one of the authors of the word of God, the Holy Spirit, ultimately, the author.

And one of the most wonderful things that a Christian can ever experience is the opening of the Scriptures, it's always good when you open the Scriptures and begin to read them to ask that the Father through the Spirit illumine the pages and words. And then to read and have the Holy Spirit teach us things that he himself knows so perfectly.

Now that's a marvelous promise, but that's not of course the only promise the Lord gives. The second is the promise of peace. When we speak to people about peace we usually say, well sometimes my friends will say, “Shalom.” Which is of course the Hebrew word for peace, or they'll say, “*Shalom Helechem,*” peace to you. And they mean something like we hope you have peace. That's what we say too, we hope you have peace. But the Lord Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” So it's not hope, it's a gift; it's what he's given. It is something like his last will and testament, it is a bequest. Now you know of course that an heir must be a member of the family. No one can be strictly speaking, an heir of another one who's not a member of the family. When the Bible says we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, there's great stress on the fact that we belong to the family of God. But we all know that we can receive bequests from someone else's will. We may not be related to them, but we can be a beneficiary of the will. Now that is the kind of thing our Lord is saying here. He's saying, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Of course within the family of God we're the heirs and this is part of our inheritance. How many people do not realize how rich they are?

A few months back there was an article in the paper, it was very interesting, you of course every year you will see at least a half a dozen instances of this in the papers in which an individual dies, everybody thought he was poor as dirt, and it turns out he was a wealthy man and went around in dirty disheveled clothes and lived amid the dirt and other things that characterize a person who's trying to save his last penny in order that he might be able to take it with him. But you cannot do it. I did hear one Jewish man who said if I can't take it with me I'm not going. But unfortunately that's not an alternative either. But this article, reads like this, it's from Tennessee. No offense to Tennessee.

“Relatives cleaning the junk filled home of a deceased seventy-seven year old man have found more than sixty-seven thousand dollars in cash and government bonds, some dating back to World War II. Since Edward Lillard died July the twenty-eighth, that’s last year, relatives have sent eighty dump truck loads of trash from his home to the county land fill. (Incidentally this morning after the 8:30 service when I read this, someone went out and said I’m going home and clean out my garage. But I don’t know yet if that was faith and no works. [Laughter] They haven’t had a chance to get home yet.) Bill Keiker, Lillard’s first cousin and an executor of his estate said he searched the home and found savings and war bonds with a face value of forty three thousand, nine hundred and twenty-five dollars and two pipe tobacco cans containing six hundred and forty dollars in old quarters and dimes. A plastic water pipe Keiker found beneath a wooden front porch was stuffed with twenty-two thousand eight hundred and twenty dollars in bills of all denominations. (It’s the first time I’ve ever seen anything notable about a plastic water pipe.) Lillard had secured the house’s basement and attic entrance with live two hundred and twenty volt electrical wires. Keiker said. (We know why he did that.) If anyone had touched one of those wires, he would have been fried alive, he said. (The last paragraph’s interesting too.) Keiker said Lillard always wore old ragged clothes, but relatives searching the attic found thirty sealed lard cans of new clothes and shoes which had been bought decades ago.”

There is a man who had a lot, but didn’t know how to use it. We have a lot, and I’m afraid that spiritually speaking, we’re very much like this man. We have all these marvelously adequate resources and we’ve not used them. We’re going to die, and we’re going to leave our resources unused it seems to me.

Now he says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Now, when the Lord Jesus says that he’s not speaking of the absence or suppression of feelings. We often have strange ideas about peace. We think a peaceful person is a placid person. Well, not necessarily. It’s nice to be

placid I suppose in certain circumstances, but placidity is not the same as peace. The best definition of biblical peace is found in the life of our Lord. What kind of peace did he have? Did he have the peace of placidity? Did he have the peace of an emotionless, stoic kind of existence? Well, no, he had the peace of convictions. But if you look at our Lord’s experiences, his experiences were anything but emotionless.

We read for example in this very Gospel of John more than once that Jesus was troubled. When he was by the side of the grave of Lazarus, he burst into sobs. That’s the meaning of the Greek expression at that point. Furthermore, he was indignant in the house when Judas suggested that that ointment that Mary poured over him should be sold and the receipts given to the poor, for he was a thief and was stealing from the common treasury. Then we also read that in one place in our Lord’s ministry he looked round about upon them with anger. So he was a man who knew all of the deep struggles of life, and then in Gethsemane amidst strong crying and tears the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, cried out, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” And even on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And a moment later, “It is finished.” So, our Lord did not have the peace of emotionless stoical kind of existence. He had the kind of peace that sustained him in the midst of experiences that were both highs and lows. That’s what our Lord is talking about. He’s talking about in the midst of our troubles, in the midst of our trials, in the midst of our difficulties, leaning upon the Lord God and receiving the strength and enablement that he gives in the experiences of life.

Now there may be a difference intended by our Lord when he says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” I pass it on to you because I’m not absolutely sure that this is the intent of our Lord, but it might be. I know this; the Bible does speak of two kinds of peace for believers. It says of course that there is no peace to the wicked. But for believers, there are two kinds of peace. There is first the peace that we receive when we are justified or reconciled to God in Heaven. For example, the Scriptures say to us that by virtue of the blood of the cross, Jesus paying for the sins of

sinner has made it possible for men who were separated from God to become the friends of God through the forgiveness of their sins as they receive the free gift of eternal life in grace.

Now when that happens, we have peace with God. We have become reconciled to him. That peace with God may be what our Lord means when he says, “Peace I leave with you.” It was the privilege of the apostles to proclaim peace, the same peace that Jesus proclaimed when he came. Now that is of course, something that is available for men. We in Believers Chapel preach that there is a peace that is available for sinners, and we proclaim it universally. That is that anyone who has come by the grace of God to understand that he is lost, a sinner, under divine judgment because of his guilt may receive the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from his guilt and condemnation through the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ and at that moment, when he receives the gift of eternal life, peace is enjoyed with God in Heaven. For God is a Holy God and he must punish sin, but he is a loving God who has provided the way back through the Lord Jesus Christ, peace that is left for us.

Isn't it a strange thing with this magnificent gospel message, there are so many who are not only ignorant of it, but often even though they may have heard the message, have not taken advantage of it. There's an old story that one of the commentators tells about an incident that occurred after the end of the Civil War. It seems that they were a troop of federal cavalry who were riding along a road between Richmond and Washington and suddenly they looked out and saw a poor wretch clothed in the ragged remnants of a confederate uniform. I'm sure this must have been the reverse. But anyway, this is the way the story came in the remnants of a tattered confederate uniform, and the individual hailed the captain of the group who drew near to him. And he said to the captain, well the captain said to him first, “Starving to death? Why don't you go into Richmond and get what you need?” And the confederate soldier said, “I don't dare do that, because if I did I would be arrested and then I would be in great difficulty.” He said, “A few weeks ago I became utterly disheartened in the confederacy and I've been waiting for an opportunity to go through the lines to the North. I knew that if I were caught down here I'd be shot for deserting in time of the war.” And the captain looked at him in amazement and said, “Haven't you heard the news?” He

said, “What news?” He said, “Why the war is over, Peace has been made, General Lee surrendered at Appomattox over three weeks ago, the confederacy is ended.” And the man is supposed to have replied, “Peace has been made for two weeks and I’ve been starving in the woods because I didn’t know it.”

And peace has been made by God through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is possible for us to enter into that peace by faith in the Lord Jesus. That’s peace with God, it’s what is expressed in the stanza of the hymn, “I hear the words of love, I gaze upon the blood, I see the mighty sacrifice, and I have peace with God.” Do you have that peace? Are you sure that your relationship with the Lord is settled and you cannot come into judgment? That’s what the Scriptures teach from the words of our Lord.

But now then he says, “My peace I give unto you.” This is a peace that is bestowed upon the trusting. I give unto you. The first kind of peace, the peace with God is linked with expiation. This one, “My peace which I give unto you,” is linked with Christian experience. One is peace with God; the other is the peace of God of which Paul speaks in Philippians chapter 3. And you’ll notice the Lord Jesus said, “Not as the world giveth give I unto you.” The world has no peace to give us. And furthermore, even if it attempted to give us some peace, it wouldn’t be the kind of peace of which he’s speaking. The world cannot give us the peace of God, only God can give us the peace of God.

Now when you look at the life of our Lord, you’ll get some idea of what that means. There was no flurry in his life, no sign of strain, no trace of nerves. And yet the experiences our Lord had are most remarkable. Contrast the experiences of the Lord with the disciples for example. Their nerves sometimes gave way. They went through a village of the Samaritans on the way to the city of Jerusalem, and on the way, they were treated rudely and inhospitably by the Samaritans. And so they said, “Lord let us call down fire from heaven, let’s teach these boorish folks a lesson or two.” And Jesus said, “You know not what manner of spirit you are of.” That’s the kind of thing that our Lord experienced, always that strong serenity. When the storm on the Sea of Galilee arose, they rushed

back to him, he had been busy all day long preaching and teaching, he was asleep in the stern of the boat and in the midst of the flashing of the lightning and the crashing of the thunder, like my weatherman in Chicago talks about boomers tonight and tomorrow, boomers were taking place over the Sea of Galilee, and the Lord Jesus was sleeping in the stern of the boat. And the apostles came and said, “Master, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” And Jesus arose and in the sovereignty of the eternal second person of the Trinity he said, “Peace, be muzzled.” That verb *themoso* comes from the word that was used of a dog, muzzling a dog, or muzzling an animal. Be muzzled, it’s almost as if he should say to the sea as if it were a dog, “Back to your kennels.” Peace, back to your kennels. And there was a great calm. That’s the kind of peace the Lord Jesus enjoyed in the midst of the storm when they were in danger.

Peter was of course known for the fact that he had difficulty with the experiences of life, particularly before the time of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus was sleeping during the storm, Peter was afraid, he was afraid on more than one occasion. He did a lot of things of which he later of course looked back with horror at. But Peter learned a few lessons, and he learned what it was to have a bit of this peace. Because you remember that later on he was taken prisoner for preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, he was thrown in prison, he had chains upon him. And the Christians were praying and the result was that the angel came into the prison at night and what would you expect Peter to be doing, his life was in danger, already one of the great men of the early church had been put to death, Peter’s life was at stake, and what would you imagine he would be doing? Biting his fingernails, worrying, praying? No, he was sleeping. And he was sleeping so soundly, that when the brilliant light of the angel came into the prison cell he still slept and the angel had to go over and the text of Acts 12 said had to shake him in order to wake him up. Now that’s peace, but in the midst of the darker experiences of life.

Now finally, there’s one final promise here and I wanted to say just a word about that statement, “For my Father is greater than I.” Jesus says in the last few verses of this section,

“You have heard how I said unto you I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass that when it is come to pass ye might believe. (When the Lord was gone they would look back and say, “He told us he would leave us so we’re not disturbed.) Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, (That is Satan is coming and he will carry out his nefarious scheme.) But he hath nothing in me. (Because there is no basis upon which Satan may as the instrumentality of the judgment of God exercise his authority toward the Lord Jesus Christ, for he was the sinless Son of God.) But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

Now we’ve already talked about Jesus’ promise of going away, so we can do it much more quickly. This is something of a recapitulation of chapter 14 and he is already made the promise that he will be gone. The Father will enlarge the work of the perfect man in their behalf. But what about this statement, “My Father is greater than I?” Now many have puzzled over this, and not simply the Arians and the Socinians, the early heretics. But even in our day there have been many, and unfortunately, even in our theological seminaries who have affirmed that this is a text that tells us that Jesus did not claim to be God.

Now that is very poor exegesis of the teaching of the New Testament but nevertheless, it is very common today. It’s rather striking that our Lord should say this, “The Father is greater than I,” and you might think that knowing that the church might have difficulty with it he would have avoided saying it. The very fact that it’s in the text gives it a note of genuineness and authenticity. It was something that he said.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge commenting concerning this says that, “This is no indication of our Lord’s denial of his deity. As a matter of fact (he said) he would never have made a statement like this if he did not belong to the same category as the Father.” You see when you compare; you compare things that are alike, of the same nature. You don’t compare a horse and a dog for example,

but you compare horses, you compare dogs, and the very fact that he said, “My Father is greater than I,” is a suggestion implicit that he belongs to the same category as the Father. But Mr. Coleridge goes on and says, “You know I write a little bit of drama.” And he said, “I might be able to say *My Remorse*,” a title of his work, “*My Remorse* has succeeded, indeed. But if I were to add but Shakespeare is a greater dramatist than I,” he said, “that would be foolish, in fact, that would be a monstrous combination of words because we could never I don’t even belong in the same category as Shakespeare as a dramatist, so to say Shakespeare is a greater dramatist than I is ridiculous.” It’s almost as if I were to say I play golf, but Jack Nicholas is greater than I. You’d know that without me saying that.

But now, I suggest to you that that is not all that is intended here. It’s possible to look at this text and say our Lord is still speaking out of his human nature, and in that sense, since he’s the divine person who possesses two natures, the divine and the human, it’s possible for him to say, “The Father is greater than I,” I’m the God-man. But to be more direct and more to the point, and more exegetical, let us remember that when the Lord Jesus, the second person of the Trinity took to himself at a particular time an additional nature, the human nature, he was the divine Son, he existed from eternity past, he became at the point of conception and then birth, the God-man. Divine person possessed of a divine nature and a human nature.

Now Paul tells us in Philippians that “though he was in the form of God, he emptied himself and he took the form of a servant.” To spell that out, that means simply this, he existed in equality with God, to be in the form of was the ancient way of saying one possessed all of the attributes of in this case, God. So he possessed all of the attributes of God, he did not think anything to be grasped after, to be equal with God the Scriptures say, but he became, taking human nature, he came in the form of a servant, a true servant. In other words, like a servant, a servant does not have any right to his actions; he is subservient to his master. Now Paul doesn’t use the term servant, he uses the term which in their context meant slave, and so you must think of slavery. Slaves did not have ultimate right of life. So Paul says, “He came in the form of a slave.” That is he

did what the Father told him to do, he said the things that the Father asked him to say. He was subservient to the Father. Subordinate in that sense to the Father. He surrendered the voluntary use of his divine attributes, he did not give up any divine attribute, he was just as much Son of God after he became Son of man as he was before, but he surrendered the voluntary use of his divine attributes. In other words, he allowed the Father to direct his life totally. For he was the mediator, he is doing the work of mediation. He is coming to carry out the saving work and ultimately the sacrificial work of the cross by which peace is made.

And let me say to you that he also is presently still carrying out his mediatorial work. Paul, in 1 Corinthians says he’s ascended to the right hand of the Father. There will come a time in the future when the Lord Jesus will hand over the kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all. And then his mediatorial work is over and the Triune God shall exist as it existed previously with the glories of each of the persons fully manifested. The only difference being they shall have a people in heaven, the people of God.

Now the Lord Jesus is speaking out of that, and so he says, “My Father is greater than I.” Not speaking out of his humanity only, but speaking out of the fact that he is the mediator. In other words, this and please get this, this statement has reference not to the essence of deity, but to his office as mediator. Not to the essence of deity, but to his office as mediator, and you’ll notice in further support of that, he says, not my God is greater than I, “my Father is greater than I.” So this is a relationship that existed between the Father and the Son for a time, it is no denial of our Lord’s deity, it is just the opposite, it is an affirmation of his deity. And that’s why Athanasius and the early church and ultimately the early church as a whole arrived at the definitions that have guided the Christian church down through the centuries. There is one God who subsists in three persons—Father, Son and Spirit—and the Son and the Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. If that’s your faith then you enjoy oneness with the testimony of the Christian church down through the centuries, for this is what the Christian church has taught from its beginning.

One might illustrate it by saying it's possible to have absolute equality and relative inequality. Always have to watch the clock, because we think about the radio broadcast, and we do need a certain few minutes, because I don't like to give KLRD anything. And we started a little late on the ministry here this morning, I'm sorry, but I'm going to tell one final illustration that might help to clarify this. We had a firm in this city which was very instrumental in helping theological seminary students through the seminary. They hired any student who would come over and say he wanted a job, which was a very foolish thing to do because there are lazy boys in theological seminary just as there are anywhere else. But anyway, they did it out of a ministry. That firm at one time had three members of one family who were its owners and heads.

I don't know the relative degree of ownership, so let me just manufacture a little bit so far as that is concerned. But the Mitchell Company was well-known to all of the Dallas students. John Mitchell was the president, Orville Mitchell was a vice president and the technical head of all of the operations, they made cotton ginning machinery, and then in the war they made war materials. And they have been in businesses like air conditioning and so on. And then Donald Mitchell was the man who was in charge of sales. Three brothers, let's assume they each owned thirty-three and a third percent of the company. But Johnny Mitchell was the kind of man who met people very well, he was a very well-known citizen of the city of Dallas, a leader in its civic life, was head of United Way at one time, things like this in the city. Orville Mitchell was exceedingly good in the technical side of business, and Don was exceedingly good in sales. Let's just assume that Johnny Mitchell were walking down the streets of Dallas and a friend should come up and say, “John I'm one of your customers, we enjoy the machinery that you make for us, it does everything that we would like for it to do. But if you don't mind, I'd like to make a request of you.” And Mr. Mitchell listens and with this he launches into a very technical discussion of some particular design that he would like to see on machinery, and I can just imagine Johnny Mitchell who's now with the Lord say, “Well I'm sorry, I don't know anything about this machinery, I'm the president of the company, and I give direction

to it, administrate, but I don't know anything about the machinery, when it comes to machinery, Orville is greater than I.

Now there is relative inequality in absolute equality. Each owning the same percentage, but in certain spheres one having authority and supremacy. So in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry while he was mediator, while there was absolute equality, relative inequality by the voluntary to the Son of God who surrendered the voluntary use of his divine attributes.

Well, Jesus said, “The prince of this world comes and he has nothing in me.” The ruler of this world, Satan, found a man who he could not rule, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let me conclude by simply saying this, two of these things we have since the Day of Pentecost. We have the promise of our Lord's departure and he has gone physically. Through the Holy Spirit however, he is present with us. That's the second promise that has come to pass. The Holy Spirit has come and he indwells all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But this other promise, this promise of peace, do we have that? Some Christians I know have a great measure of this promise. Some it seems do not have very much. What is it? Let me simplify, it's a sense of adequate resources in the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amid the crowds, amid the crises, amid the difficulties, amid of course even the greatest of trials, he knew the peace of God, and he knew that it was adequate for all of the experiences of life. That's what peace is, the sense that we have adequate resources in the Triune God. And of course it's the sense of fellowship with God which the Lord Jesus has, and which we may have.

Someone says, “Ah that may be for you preachers Dr. Johnson.” Let me tell you preachers have trials just like anyone else. There was a Baptist preacher once who experienced something our Lord experienced, rejection. That's one of the most difficult things our Lord had to bear, disappointment no doubt that people did not respond to the ministry. This Baptist preacher finally couldn't stand it any longer. And one morning he got up at a particular point in his message, and finally just said, “Go to Hell!” And of course he resigned. Our Lord even had adequate resources for the rejection that came.

But perhaps you say, it is only for preachers or perhaps elders and deacons. No, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Not simply to the apostles who then go on in their epistles and tell us this peace is for all who believe in Jesus Christ. May God give you the experience of it. I’m sorry to have kept you over a few minutes this morning, but we will not allow KLRD to have extra profit on this broadcast at least. If you’re here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus, what you need is the peace with God that comes through the saving work of Jesus Christ. May God bring you by his grace to trust in him personally.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of reading the word of God of hearing the message of the word of God and particularly for the Holy Spirit’s illumination of the pages of the word. And O Father, if there are some who have never received the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior, give them no rest or peace until they rest ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]