

Be not faithless, but believing

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Dear Heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, how excellent is thy name. We thank you, oh Lord, for preserving this place once again, for preserving this time, for calling us away from the world and all the things that so easily beset us. Lord, I pray that you would attend this hour and the hour to come with thy power, with thy love, with thy mercy and with thy comfort. Father, we pray for those who are not with us today, but know, Lord, that thy Spirit would unite us all together this day in the one truth. Lord, we pray that you would be a present help to them and now, Lord, that thou would be a present help to us. Lord, may you come mighty to our soul this day and meet us in thy Word. Lord, be with me and, Lord, may thy truth be upon me this hour. Keep me Lord from myself and may thy name be glorified. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I think this morning we are going to go straight to the text. It is found in John chapter 20 and verse 27. It is the words that Jesus said to Thomas. I hope you stand with me this morning and can identify with Thomas a little bit. We will talk about that more later. But in John chapter 20 verse 27 the Lord's words to Thomas were:

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”¹

I was struck this week when over the last week as we have entered into that time of year where it seems like the radios and the TVs and everything is flooded with Christmas stories. I spent some time this week in our family time as the children were watching a Christmas movie. I sat and I watched it with them for a while and it seemed like all of them always go the same way. There is someone there that just doesn't have the Christmas spirit. This just doesn't believe. And they are told to believe. If you believe, miraculous things will happen.

In this particular movie the one that had to believe was the power of the big red guy so he could fly through the air. Well, that is nice for TV. But, you know, we come to this time of year and the whole world it is time to believe. It is time to believe in something, to believe in a spirit, to believe in giving, believe in peace, believe in joy. But I put forth to you today and I pray the power of the Holy Ghost is behind these words that unless the

¹ John 20:27.

Lord Jesus Christ comes to your soul as he did to Thomas this day and as he speaks to you with the command and the enabling as Dr. Hawker used to say, the Lord's commands are his enablements. And as he commanded Thomas that hour and that minute to be not faithless, but believing, at that moment is when faith was imparted. In that moment was when faith was imputed.

We spend a lot of time trying to conjure up a belief of something. And if you think about that in your own daily walk, in your own time, in the trials that you have in your life, we, too, are like that. We like to see things to believe them. We like to feel better about a situation and the situation, whatever trial it is, if we get good news or if we hear something palatable to our ears, we feel better. We have peace. But this section we look at today in the Word of God here that the Lord has preserved for us, the way the Lord works is much different from that.

I wonder if you have experienced the difference. So today I want to look at this text and the surrounding verses as we begin today in 24.

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”²

It is an interesting thing that when the Lord appeared to them after the resurrection the first time that Thomas was not there. We are not told why Thomas wasn't there. We don't know if he had family to deal with or a vocation to deal with. All we are told is that Thomas was not with them. Thomas was not part of them when Jesus came and appeared the first time.

Now I want you to understand, first of all, what Thomas missed. He missed the Lord appearing to them. He was not present with them at that time, with the people of God, with the other 10. And he missed out on something. And that tells us something in our daily walk. Sometimes when we are not with the people of God when they meet we may miss out on something. I have experienced that many times. But, as you will see in this passage, the faithfulness of the Lord he forgets not his own.

All throughout this passage what is very prevalent is the love of Christ. All throughout it is the love of Christ.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.³

Now you could pick up about any commentary you want to and almost all of them are going to talk about Thomas' obstinence. They are going to talk about Thomas' unbelief. They are going to talk about how bitter Thomas was. But, you know, we are not told

² John 20:24.

³ John 20:24-25.

that. What are we told? We are told that the other disciples told Thomas that they saw the Lord. And that had to bring them great peace, because Thomas, too, was one of the 11 that scattered that night. As the shepherd was smitten, Thomas and all of the others scattered and went all of their different ways. But now the Lord has appeared to all of them but Thomas. Is Thomas to live upon the faith of others? Is Thomas to say, “Well, because you believe I am going to believe?”

One thing that usually gets overlooked in this verse is how honest Thomas is. We have a problem with that. We have a problem with how brutally honest Thomas is about his nature, because aren't we supposed to be better? Aren't we supposed to be believing Christians? Aren't we supposed to be able to just know that the Lord has risen and we have heard that the Lord has risen and that is to be enough?

It is a very deep question, because, see, Thomas was there when the Lord raised Lazarus. So Thomas knew and believed in the resurrection. Thomas knew the power of the resurrection. Thomas was the one that, when the Lord said that he would die, that he was dead, Thomas said, “Let's go die with him,” in his limited understanding. But Thomas was there. He saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb. He saw the grave clothes fall off of him. He saw the power of the resurrection. But yet he can't believe. He sits there with the 10 of his brothers who had seen and followed Christ everywhere. And he sat at his feet and all of them being taught and all of them being sent out and all of them having that kinship together, but Thomas can't believe.

Why? Children, I want you to understand today that you can't believe because your parents believe. Husbands and wives, as you sit next to your husband and wife, you can't believe because they believe. See, when the Lord says those words to Thomas that is when faith came. Faith is a gift of God.

And notice how convinced Thomas is. I want you to notice how convinced he is that he cannot believe until he does these things. Now notice. Take a special notice to what he says.

“We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”⁴

Now you think about that, dear ones. How many times in the trials that we have, until we get that news, until we see the doctor's report, until we see the news report, until we apprehend and feel it, we don't believe it. Sometimes it is necessary to see it with our eyes.

Thomas is always labeled the one, the doubter. Oh, you have doubts like Thomas. Yes, I do. Oh, you have unbelief like Thomas. Yes, I do. And praise be to God that when the Lord does reveal the wretchedness and the wickedness of sin and he shows me what I am capable of and he shows me that I am incapable of believing... You know, as I said. I

⁴ John 20:25.

watched a couple of those shows this week and in the picture of the person that had to believe as always pictured with them closing their eyes real tight and just scrunching up like this, like, oh, I have just got to believe and if like it something they can conjure up. And then all of the sudden something mystical happens.

But I want you to follow the Lord's work today and how the Lord moved. We produce so much faith of our own, but it is not the faith of Christ.

“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.”⁵

And praise be to God that they did.

“But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”⁶

That is my depravity. That is how much I don't believe. I know because I left Christ that night. As they took him to go to trial, as they took him to scourge him, as they took him to beat him, I left and I ran away and I won't believe today that he is resurrected until I take my hand and I put it in that nail hole and I thrust it into his side where that spear went. That is the way that I will believe, because I know myself. I know that that is what it will take for me to believe.

Verse 26 says:

“And after eight days...”⁷

Oh, my goodness. Can you believe it? What do you mean? Don't you want to believe Thomas? Why didn't you just believe? And, Lord, why did you leave him that way? Eight days of doubt. Eight days of unbelief. Eight days of trembling in his soul. Eight days of turmoil and no peace.

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them.”⁸

Thomas, even though he had no comfort in his soul did not forsake the assembly of the brethren. He was with them. And as hard as you believe and as often as you believe that statement is, and as difficult and how unbelieving you believe it is, the Lord kept him. And he kept him with his people. And Thomas didn't run this time and Thomas is still with the people and he is still waiting, waiting, but not knowing, not truly knowing the faithfulness of his Lord.

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.”⁹

⁵ John 20:25.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John 20:26.

⁸ Ibid.

See, you can shut your eyes. You can grab on to something. You can grab on to someone. You can grab this Bible today and hold it as close as you want to your side. You could grab a cross. You could go to listen to whatever Christmas special you want to listen to. You can hear great song and things of the season to believe and you can conjure up a temporary belief and a temporary joy. But this is where it all begins. It begins in the Word and the power of Christ. He will make you willing in the day of his power. He always has and he always will.

As he came in that night he said unto them, “Peace be unto you.” No other man could give that peace. Eight days of doubt, eight days of soul anguish. And as the Lord appeared to Thomas, at that very moment and he spoke those words of command and he spoke those words of love and he spoke those words into the soul of Thomas and all the other 10 that were there, Thomas’ fears were gone. Thomas doubts now are no longer there. Remember what Thomas said must take place for him to believe.

Then we come to our text.

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands.”¹⁰

Well, Jesus, where did you get such a saying? He met Thomas. He condescended down to where Thomas said, “This is how I will believe.” And Jesus said, “This is what you wanted? This is the desire of your heart? This is how you know that you will believe? Then reach hither thy finger and behold my hands. Look at them.”

As he turned them and he showed them the nail prints. And reach hither thy hand, put your hand right here and thrust it into my side.

And do you know what? He still won’t believe. He might for a moment. He might believe that Jesus is who he is for a moment. But the Lord didn’t leave him there. He didn’t leave him there to believe based on what he said he would believe in.

Do you understand today as you and I sit in this place in this season in this time... and it doesn’t matter that it is this season. Do you understand what a mercy it is to believe in Christ? That is where the Lord took me when I was watching those shows. What makes me different? I remember being a child growing up and believing that stuff. What makes me different today? The grace of my Lord Jesus Christ. And what a great mercy that he would choose someone like me. And there is no other way to believe. There is no other way to believe in the one true Christ and the Father who sent him and the power of the Holy Ghost until the Lord says it in the power to your soul. And he says to you:

“...be not faithless, but believing.”¹¹

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John 20:27.

¹¹ Ibid.

Habakkuk was the first to tell us that the just shall live by his faith. Many others... Paul would come after and say the same thing a couple of times. But Habakkuk, when the Lord gave it to that prophet, I always love it when it came to him, because the just shall live by his faith, It is the faith of the Son of God. Paul tells us in Ephesians that:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”¹²

It is the gift of God to believe. And what he gave Thomas at this hour, at this moment was the faith to believe. You say, “Well, it is because he put his finger in his side.” Did he? Is that what your Bible says? Does your Bible tell you that he put his finger in his side? Does he tell you that he thrust his hand in his side?

“...be not faithless, but believing.”¹³

Do you know what that is? That is absolutely pure love, pure love. He didn't bruise the tender reed. He didn't quench the smoking flax. He looked down at his child. He looked into the soul of Thomas and he said, “You know, I was there when you made that statement. I heard that statement. Now believe. Believe without it.”

Can the Lord work with means? Oh, absolutely. Is he bound to work without means? Absolutely not. Oh, Thomas, reach hither thy finger.

Now I am not telling you he didn't. Mostly everybody believes he did. I am just saying it is not recorded that he did. Whether he did or not it doesn't matter, because without the command, without the loving power, without the enabling without the shepherd's love Thomas could not believe. And do you know what? You and I can't either.

Now you want to know the difference between your faith that you conjure and the faith of the Son of God? It is found in verse 28.

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”¹⁴

Oh, but Thomas, isn't it recorded for us that you actually walked over there and you did it? Nope.

You know, I love the Greek here. Let me read you what the Greek says. The Greek says the Lord of me and the God of me. You are the Lord of me and the God of me. Lord means the master possessing supreme authority. That fear and that unbelief was not my Lord anymore. That doubting that I may have had is not my Lord anymore.

“...be not faithless, but believing.”¹⁵

¹² Ephesians 2:8.

¹³ John 20:27.

¹⁴ John 20:28.

¹⁵ John 20:27.

And then the fruit of his work.

“My Lord and my God.”¹⁶

What power. What else could he say?

Asaph said it this way in Psalm 73:25 and 26.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.¹⁷

Peter said in John 6:68:

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”¹⁸

That is what faith produces. It produces a glorifying of the Son. It produces an unwavering belief and a personal belief. Do you understand that word my? It is not Lord and God. It is my Lord and my God. And praise be to God that everyone of us children will experience this, where he removes all your helps. You know what he took Thomas through here? He took him through the stripping room. He stripped him of all the carnality, showed him his carnality. He showed him that he could not believe. He showed him the height of his depravity, that it doesn't matter that if people say he is alive. It doesn't matter if they say that we have seen him. I have got to feel him. I have got to touch him.

Behold what matter of love the Lord has for his own.

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”¹⁹

What a revelation. What a mercy. That is what I mean. You and I today if we believe, if we believe in the birth of our Lord, if we believe that the Lord has come in time to save his people from their sins, if we believe that he lived a sinless and holy and perfectly obedient life, if we believe that he laid down his life for his friends, if we believe that he died and three days later that he rose from the dead, if we believe that he ascended into heaven, if we believe that while he was on the cross he said, “It is finished,” in all things pertaining to our salvation and everything to our life is wrapped up in those three words that he finished it all right then for his children, if you believe that, it is because he has said to your soul”

¹⁶ John 20:28.

¹⁷ Psalm 73:25-26.

¹⁸ John 6:68.

¹⁹ John 20:28.

“...be not faithless, but believing.”²⁰

He has commanded your soul to do so. That is the power of our Lord.

You know there is a saying. And I have heard ... well, I haven't heard them, because I read them. But Philpot has used it. Irons has used it. Bradbury has used it. All of them seem to use the same thing. When talking about belief it said, “You know, I could just as soon make a world than believe in God. I can't do it without him without him, his power. I can't believe in him. I might as well make a whole world as like the Lord did.”

I have read that thing I don't know how many times. I think, what are they trying to say? It would be easier for me to make a whole world and the whole planet and all the water and all the land and carve it out than it would for me to believe. That is what the fall plunged us into. That is what we are dead in. And if you think any differently you are grossly mistaken.

You believe today that you can believe in Christ of your own free will. You are grossly in error.

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”²¹

Then listen to what Jesus says to him.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.”²²

What made him any different then the other 10? Nothing. It is the power of faith when the Lord in his sovereignty, in his sovereign time to bring it. Eight days, dear ones. We don't like that. That is tough on us, eight days. Eight days of grueling. You know, eight days are better than 10. Eight days are better than 20. The Lord knows the perfect time to come to the souls of his children.

“...because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”²³

Now let's take this first part. Thomas, because thou hast seen me, because I have provided myself to you today, I have answered your plea. I have answered your prayer. What a loving Lord. What a loving Lord to do so.

But what about the second part? What about blessed are they that have not seen? What about you and I today? What about you and I in the year 2012? Jesus isn't physically in front of us. But what love, what love for his children in all the ages.

²⁰ John 20:27.

²¹ John 20:28.

²² John 20:29.

²³ Ibid.

“...blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”²⁴

You know how they are going to believe? The same way Thomas did, by the same command. So we don't have to have his nails and his hands in front of us because he is the author and the finisher of our faith. And we don't have to have... we can have elements in front of us and ask the Lord to bless them that we may see his body and see his blood. And when the Lord brings that powerfully to our soul, he is not physically in front of us again. Nope.

“...blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”²⁵

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:7:

“(For we walk by faith, not by sight.)”²⁶

We don't walk around with crosses on our chest. We don't cling to a cross in that way. We put no credence. We put no stock or anything in the religious elements of this world. We don't. But our Lord Jesus Christ who appears just as real and just as mighty as he did to Thomas and he comes through the vehicle of faith.

I can't say it any better than Paul did in Galatians 2:20.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”²⁷

Oh, Paul, what are you saying? Don't you have your own faith? Don't you believe of your own self? No.

“I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”²⁸

Do you know what he did for Thomas? He loved him and he gave himself for Thomas and he gave himself again to come and to appear in front of him. He loves his own. He never... not one will be plucked from his hand.

Paul said he was one born out of due time. When the Lord appeared to him he was one born out of due time. It was later. And all this time he was persecuting the Church. He is sitting in the feet of Gamaliel. He is learning the law. He is learning the zeal for religion. Do you have zeal for religion today? May the Lord destroy it in you as he did in Paul.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:7.

²⁷ Galatians 2:20.

²⁸ Ibid.

I pray that your zeal today is a zeal for this Lord. I pray that he comes and says, “Be not faithless, but believing.”

But do you know, dear ones, he is a faithful Lord and he is faithful to come over and over? We need him every hour. We need him to come over and over to tell us to be not faithless, but believing. Something this day or something this week will shake you and will shake your faith. May the Lord come to your soul and tell you to be not faithless, but believing, because with that loving command comes loving power. Faithful is he that calleth you to believe who will do it, who will produce the faith as it is his gift to do so.

It is interesting how this chapter ends.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.²⁹

Well, why is that ye might believe and not ye will believe? Because John knows what has been revealed to us today, that faith is a gift of God. Oh, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye, that is the Church, might have life through his name.

That is what Paul saying. “I live by the faith of the Son of God.” May this faith be given to you this season to believe in the one true God and Jesus Christ who he has sent. May the faith be given to you in the power of Christ to not be faithless, but believing and may that gift be the greatest gift that you get this season and may that gift be the gift that the Lord is pleased to impart to the souls of his children and may it become unspeakable to {?} as you see the Lord Jesus Christ as your necessity, as your all in all and as everything needful.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, may you add your power. May our come with power to thy Word this morning. Lord, may you command and love thy people and may you tell them this day to be not faithless, but believing to the glory of your name. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

²⁹ John 20:30-31.