

Stop Unbelieving and Start Believing

John 20:24-29 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, who was called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, **I will not believe.**”

²⁶ Eight days later His disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Jesus *came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be to you.” ²⁷ Then He *said to Thomas, “Place your finger here, and see My hands; and take your hand and put it into My side; and **do not continue in disbelief, but be a believer.**”²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus *said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you now believed? **Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.**”

Introduction

Today’s story is well known: the doubting Thomas who refused to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Jesus said to him, “Stop unbelieving” (v. 27). Although we’ve heard the story before, let’s revisit it one more time.

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A few things stand out in today’s story.

First, **God is everywhere, and He sees everything and hears every word we say** (v. 25, v. 27): Did you know that God knows everything going on in your life right now? He knows what you are up against, sees every move you take, hears every word you speak, and examines every thought you have in mind. He even knows the darkest secrets in your heart: *He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him* (Daniel 2:22, NKJV). Nothing can we hide from God.

When the Ten disciples told Thomas that they had seen the risen Lord, he refused to believe their account. He said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, unless I put my finger into the nail mark and my hand into His side, **I will not believe.**” Pay attention to his emphatic tone in verse 25: *I will not believe.* In the original Greek, it literally means, *I will not **NOT** believe* (v. 25). A double negation in Greek. In English translation, the closest meaning would be ‘I will **never ever** believe.’ A very strong ‘Nay.’

To the Ten disciples (and to most of us) seeing the risen Lord with eyes was good enough to believe. But, not to Thomas. He wanted tangible evidence. To him, seeing the

risen Christ with eyes alone was not enough evidence to believe in the actual resurrection of the Lord. He wanted to check the imprint of the nails in Jesus' hands. He wanted to touch Jesus. He wanted to *feel* the risen Christ. He wanted to *put his finger into the nail mark and throw his hand into the side of Jesus* the Crucified before he confessed, "Now, I believe." What a stubborn man, or a scientific-minded man he was! The words Thomas spoke to his fellow disciples that day, Jesus heard them all: Every word of it.

Eight days later, the disciples got together again: this time all the Eleven including Thomas. Then, in their midst, the risen Christ appeared. I believe that the sole reason why the Lord appeared to them was because of Thomas.

After saying "Shalom" to the Eleven, Jesus turned to Thomas and spoke to him directly. Looking straight, Jesus directed His words to nobody else but Thomas: "Bring your finger to my nail mark and throw your hand into my side!" Thomas cried out to Jesus saying, "My Lord and My God! (v. 28)." What an unforgettable encounter with the risen Christ!

True Conversion, True to Jesus: If you ask me, what I think of Thomas and his character, I will say a very stubborn man for sure, yet genuine. Mind you that the risen Christ didn't appear to everyone who had doubts on His resurrection. But, to Thomas, He did. Did you know the same Thomas later took the Gospel to India, thousands of miles away from Israel? There, he became a martyr for the sake of the Gospel.

I must say this: you will never waver in faith when you have an unforgettable encounter with Jesus like Thomas did. Those who truly experienced Jesus would never deny Him afterward. If you are converted like Thomas was converted, you will never forsake the Lord. E.g., Paul the Apostle. He was dead against Christians. He was fuming a breath of death to the believers in Christ before he met Jesus. He would chase them, arrest them, and put them in prison. He persecuted the Church so much that every believer was afraid of his name. Everything changed when Jesus appeared to him in a vision. That day, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. And he served the Lord for the rest of his life and died for the same Jesus. The Bible and the history of the Church are filled with such genuine conversion stories of real people who remained true to Jesus to death. True conversion means, true to Jesus. All the way. Until we die. May we all have such an unforgettable encounter with the Lord.

In verse 27, Jesus said to Thomas, "**Do not continue in disbelief, but be a believer.**"

Stop unbelieving: It literally means, "Stop being unbelieving, but be believing." Wait a minute. Let's consider Thomas again. He was not an unbeliever. He was one of the original Twelve disciples of Jesus. He believed in God. He believed in Jesus the Messiah. He walked with Jesus every day. He ate with Him. He slept with Him. He did the ministry with Him for three years. He performed many miracles in the name of Jesus, healing the sick and casting out demons from people. He even was ready to die for the Lord (John 11:16). If there's anyone who believed in Jesus, he was the one.

So, how do we understand when Jesus told him to stop unbelieving? It means this: when it comes down to the resurrection of Christ, unless you believe it, you are not a believer in Him. Your faith is in vain. It doesn't matter how long you have been going to church. It doesn't matter what position you are serving in the Church. What really matters to Jesus is whether you believe in His bodily resurrection or not. Your belief in **Christ's bodily resurrection** is *that* important. It is a matter of salvation as well. Romans 10:9 says, *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"*

Some folks in the Church today don't believe in Christ's physical resurrection, yet still claim they are followers of Christ. I am talking about some theologians who publish books about Christ, professors who teach in seminary, pastors, Sunday School teachers, even bishops who genuinely don't believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection. Years ago, in my seminary, I had the New Testament professor who openly denied Christ's bodily resurrection in the name of science. That totally turned me off from the New Testament Studies, and I ended up majoring in the Old Testament.

Another story of a minister I heard of. In one church (I will leave the denomination unnamed) a few people were about to join the congregation as official members. At the conclusion of the membership class, the minister confessed saying, *"To be honest with you, I don't believe in Christ's bodily resurrection."* *"Is that OK with you? Would you still join the church?"* he asked. The same minister still preaches. Let me tell you this. Even though he can preach all the faith and love in the world until his face is blue, in the eyes of the Lord, he is not a believer in Christ—he is unbelieving like the doubting Thomas.

Paul the apostle, in 1 Corinthians 15, reasserts the importance of believing in resurrection. He writes: ¹² *Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ¹³ *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised;* ¹⁴ *and if Christ has not been raised, then **our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain.*** ¹⁵ *Moreover, we are even found to be **false witnesses of God**, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.* ¹⁶ *For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised;* ¹⁷ *and **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*** ¹⁸ *Then also **those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*** ¹⁹ ***If we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied.*** Stop unbelieving. Start believing.

Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed (v. 29): According to the Bible, there are three types of people in terms of believing in Jesus. First, those who won't believe in Him even after they saw the miracles Jesus performed. Some Jews in the time of Jesus belong to this category. They refused to believe in Jesus as the Messiah even *after* they witnessed Jesus' feeding the 5000 people with five loaves and two fish (John 6:36). Second, those who will believe only after they see His miracles. As far as Christ's resurrection is

concerned, some people like Thomas are not going to believe Christ's resurrection until they have tangible proof. Third type, of course, are those who believe in Christ's resurrection in the Bible without seeing any evidence. Jesus calls such people blessed. Now, going back to today's story.

It is quite intriguing to see Jesus here, very kind and patient to appear and allow Thomas to put his finger and hand into His nail mark and side. I must say that Thomas was special and blessed in a sense that he was the only one allowed in human history to bring his finger and hand to place them in Christ's nail mark and side. Considering even Mary Magdalene was forbidden to touch the risen Christ (John 20:17), that's an amazing privilege and blessing. Yet, Christ declares that some people are more blessed than Thomas. Why? Because they believe in His resurrection without seeing.

Believing is a funny business. Some people have strong faith in Christ. They don't struggle with miracles of God. They don't need any proof of God's existence or powers, either. The belief in the resurrection of the dead comes naturally to them, too. Others like Thomas are very skeptical about many God's miracles including Christ's bodily resurrection, let alone their own resurrection. But, if you believe all the miracles in the Bible without seeing any proof, Jesus says, you are the blessed one. Do you believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection? Then, thank God for your faith. In God's eyes, you are truly blessed. If you still look for God's signs and proofs in your faith including Christ's resurrection, I sincerely pray that God will be kind to show you what you search for as He did for Thomas. Blessed are those who believe in Christ's bodily resurrection without seeing.

Conclusion

Have faith in Jesus. Believe that He died for your sins and that He resurrected from the dead. Believe in your own resurrection as well. It will happen. Stop unbelieving. Start believing. Be a blessed one. Amen.