

Series: John  
Title: The Blessing of Believing  
Text: John 20: 18-31  
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**John 20: 18: Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her. 19: Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews,...**

The Lord Jesus bore the sin and the curse of his people deserved and finished the work of redemption then was buried in the tomb. Our Substitute was made sin for us and he owned our sins. He knew beforehand this would be a stumbling block to the faith of his disciples. As he bore the shame of the cross and the reproach, he interceded for his people not to be ashamed of him.

Psalm 69: 5: O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 6: Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7: Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. 8: I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9: For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

Knowing this was coming, many times he declared that it was necessary that he lay down his life on the cross. He worked many miracles to fully show them his all-sufficiency: restoring sight to the blind, raising Lazarus after four days dead in the grave. The Savior declared he would raise himself again the third day after his death. He gave them facts of the gospel and many signs and miracles. But what they saw with their carnal eyes--their carnal senses and reason--left them in unbelief.

That evening some gathered together. They were brave to do so but they did so in great fear of the Jews. We can picture them like we stand in the back in little groups. Mary Magdalene and the other women and the two from Emmaus told them Christ. Scripture says the women's words were as idle tales and they believed them not.

They had all forsaken the Lord Jesus in the hour of his greatest need. Peter denied him three times and even swore that he never knew him. You can imagine the guilt they felt: the shame and fear overwhelming them. Mark says "They mourned and wept"; it was felt misery; all due to unbelief. The locked door for fear of the Jews is an example of how we fear men and turn to carnal means when in unbelief. What is the only way they will be saved from this and faith restored?

Then "**came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.**" Christ is the Prince of peace. He had already made atonement for their sins. Their sins--all the sins of his elect--had been punished and put away by Christ already. So he came to them and said, "*Peace be unto you.*" The Lord Jesus Christ was sent into the world by God the Father "to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace" (Lu 1:79).

**John 20: 20: And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.**

He had a real body. Our risen Savior is not a spirit or a ghost. He told them "Handle Me and see, a spirit hath not flesh and bone, as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39). This was great condescension of our gracious, merciful Redeemer to do this for them--and for us. He appears now in the presence of the Father with those same wounds declaring he accomplished the redemption of his people.

Revelation 5:6: [John said] And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne....stood a Lamb as it had been slain,...

**John 20: 21: Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. 22: And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:**

Here we have an example of what it is to "receive." The disciples did nothing. The Lord filled them with the Holy Spirit like God breathed into Adam the breathe of life. We receive the Spirit like an empty vessel receives the liquid poured into it, like oil poured into a lamp. The river runs into the valley. So Christ comes to us lowly and fills us with the water of life. With the Spirit and the Word comes the immediate life and willingness to believe on the Lord Jesus.

**John 20: 23: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.**

He did not give his apostles--nor any believer--ability to absolve sins as the pope claims. Nor was this merely given to the apostles or to preachers. This is the Lord's commission to the born-again church. Together we preach the good news that 'Jesus Christ was manifested to take away sin.' He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' We preach 'behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!' When they preached, "Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified" then they were doing what this passage commissioned them to do. To him who believes on Christ the gospel declares, 'Thy sins are forgiven'; to him who believes not on the Lord the gospel declares, "Thy sins remain." The apostle Paul gives the best commentary on this:

2 Corinthians 2: 14: Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and [God] maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15: For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

**John 20: 24: But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25: 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.**

Didymus means the twin. I can tell you who Thomas twin is, me! Thomas was not the only one with the problem of unbelief. The others believed not when they were told he was risen. We can all take our place as Thomas' twin.

But the fact that none believed he arose at first is a testimony that did arise. These first witnesses were not folks deluded into believing just anything as the world charges us. They believed because the Lord gave them faith to believe he arose.

We do not know why Thomas did not assemble with them but he was not there. But that is the very worst thing we can do when cast down. Not assembling with God's saints to hear the gospel will certainly do to us what it did to Thomas. His unbelief and doubt increased, even into obstinacy. He said, "*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.*"

We have all heard and said the expression, "I will believe it when I see it." Thomas had not only 2 or 3 witnesses but he had the 10 apostles, as well as the women. But he declared he would not believe unless he saw the Lord with his own eyes and touched his wounds. I will not believe unless my carnal senses are satisfied!

What pride to lay down conditions on which we will believe. But what grace and tender condescension that our Lord Jesus comes to us in our unbelief and restores us. Where sin abounds, His grace much more abounds!

2 Timothy 2:13: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

**John 20: 26: 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.**

The Lord did not appear for 8 days. Remember why he did not go immediately to Lazarus tomb?--"because he loved them." Soon they would not have his bodily presence. So like a mother will stand little away from her child, to encourage it to try to walk, the Lord did not appear again for 8 days. The Lord is wise in his dealings with his children. He is teaching us in the new spirit to believe him. Every trial and every joy is to teach us to walk by faith not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:16: Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Philippians 3:3: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

This next time Thomas was present. Again our Lord said, "*Peace be unto you.*"

**John 20: 27: 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. 28: And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.**

The Lord spoke to Thomas the very words Thomas had said when he was alone with the other apostles. Thomas was alone with his brethren when he made that statement. So when the Lord said the very words Thomas had spoken in his unbelief, Thomas immediately believed. Thomas knew "He knows all things; he knows my wretched unbelief. Yet, he came to me in mercy and grace and revealed himself to me. He is my Lord and my God."

The Lord told Nathanael his heart when he saw him under the fig-tree. And Nathaniel broke out with the exclamation, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God." The Lord told the woman at the well all her sins yet promised her the living water; and she declared "Come see a man that told me everything I ever did; is not this the Christ!" The Lord told Peter he would deny him and Peter argued he would not because he loved him more than the others. But after he denied the Lord and the Lord came to him in mercy to restore him and he asked Peter if he loved him more than these, Peter answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love you."

The best thing we can do when all is dark is remember, "Lord, thou knowest." The only time we have faith is when Christ is speaking, revealing himself in our hearts, revealing that he knows all our sins and unbelief, yet he speaks peace into our hearts, revealing he loves us and has mercy on us. That is how he alone makes us believe on him.

The Lord commanded Thomas, '*Be not faithless, but believing.*' The literal words of our Lord are 'become not faithless, but believing.' It is not a question of evidence or feelings or the carnal senses. The problem is our natural heart. Determination not to believe is the depraved, natural heart in every sinner. Thomas was more than "doubting Thomas." He said, "*I will not believe except...*" The more we go on determined not to believe the more hardened we will become in unbelief. Only the

Lord speaking into us effectually make us willing to believe. And the more the Lord quickens us and delivers despite our unbelief, the more he makes us childlike in faith.

The point of the passage is next.

**John 20: 29: Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.**

Our Lord declares we would not be more blessed if we saw Christ with our eyes and our hands handled him. But "*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" Our Lord teaches us not to judge what he can or cannot do based on carnal senses but believe him, believe his word.

He promises his child "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deut 31: 6). When all is well to our carnal senses, we believe him. But when God takes all away but his promise then we are troubled. But the Lord strengthens faith in the midst of it. The Lord is teaching us to believe him--his word--he is our foundation.

The Lord had promised the apostles "the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church." While his bodily presence was with them they believed. But when his bodily presence was removed, they were in a room with the door locked fearing the Jews. The Lord teaches us not to lean on carnal senses but believe him. He shall not fail nor forsake us.

The Lord showed Ezekiel the valley of dry bones and asked can these bones live. Then when Ezekiel preached and asked God, he sent the Spirit and they rose up alive. The fact we believe should make us know that our Redeemer is able to overcome the greatest natural impossibilities. Believe the Lord Jesus.

Faith is not without reason. When the Lord declares "I blot out your transgressions for mine own sake", it is impossible to believe this without the use of reason. He teaches us to be able to give a reason of our hope. But the reason is him and spiritual discernment he has given. God speaks it, Christ accomplished putting away our sin, the Spirit persuaded us it is so.

Faith believes God's ability over natural reason and sight when natural reason says something cannot be possible. Sarah laughed when God said she would have a child due to her age and the deadness of her womb. But "Abraham was strong in faith and considered not his own body being dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb." Faith stopped him from hearing the reasons nature suggested to him and he believed God is able and God did it. The same when he offered up Isaac.

Natural reason says a man cast into the fire will be burned. God gave the three Hebrew children faith to believe "Our God is able, and will deliver us." And he did. Our Lord manifest his ability to save us throughout every trial more by letting them be thrown in the fire than he would have if he stopped it from happening. He was with them and not a hair was singed.

So Thomas and the others did not believe Christ arose because it appeared impossible naturally. They had seen him raise Lazarus from the grave. That teaches us natural sight does not help us. The Lord Jesus teaches us that it is blessed to believe on him without the encouragements or discouragements natural reason and natural senses suggest.

Believe the word of God. *John says these things are written that we might believe.* We need the Lord to open the eye of faith that we might behold wondrous things out of his law. It is more blessed to believe God's word rather than lean on natural sight or feelings.

God gives us blessed seasons of refreshing with joy and peace and the sense of his presence. But do not depend on those feelings. Believe the Lord Jesus and his precious promises. We are thankful for health, family, wealth, and all temporal blessings. But we must trust Christ alone. In his prosperity David thought he would not be moved because he looked on those things. God showed him he was upheld by God's face, not those feelings.

Psalm 30: 6: [David said] in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7: LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

We love assurance! And Christ promises light! But never trust feelings or temporal things. Trust Christ alone! Walk by faith not by sight. The flesh profits nothing. When the night season comes like David, God's charges us, "Who is among you that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord." Isaiah 1. 10.

Feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving;  
My warrant is the Word of God--  
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned  
For want of some sweet token,  
There is One greater than my heart  
Whose Word cannot be broken.

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word  
Till soul and body sever,

For, though all things shall pass away,  
HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER

Thomas thought it a far easier to believe Christ to be risen, by seeing him and touching his body. But Christ says, "*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" When our Lord spoke, immediately, Thomas believed him, "*My Lord and my God!*" The same with Mary, Peter, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Thomas.

In history, every other name is eventually forgotten. Only one Name, one Person, speaking his word into the heart gives his child faith to believe on him today, even as they did over 2000 years ago in that upper room. His word triumphs over space and time and sight and feelings and immediately makes his child believe on him.

Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is more substantial, more concrete evidence than anything we can see with carnal eyes; faith sees Him who is invisible.

1 Peter 1: 8: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9: Receiving [right now] the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls. [even Christ our Salvation]

**John 20: 30: And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31: 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.**

**Amen!**