

Doubters Blessed

The dictionary teaches us that doubt is “a feeling of uncertainty or a lack of conviction” or “a state in which the mind remains suspended” or “to hesitate or waver.” In many areas of life, doubt is a good thing. It is good for us to doubt whether a business decision is the right thing or a relationship is the best one for us, etc. But it is not healthy when we doubt our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. James says, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” Sometimes our doubts are driven by a self-condemning or overly analytical personality, but we must increasingly learn to deal with ourselves so that our doubts are gradually removed. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. Unbelief is. Doubt attends any person who is seeking to believe anything, so we should expect doubts in the most important decision of life, namely, the decision to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

As the apostle John completes his gospel account in which he pleads with us to believe in Christ as the Son of God, he conveys this event that occurred one week after the resurrection of Jesus—an event that is very instructive for us in dealing with our own doubts.

John 20:24-29

24 Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin,⁴ was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” **26** Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” **28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

There are three primary things we should learn from this text.

I. **Doubters typically contribute to their own doubts (vv. 24-25)**

Thomas contributed to his own doubting in at least two ways.

A. We sometimes absent ourselves from the assemblies of worship (v. 24).

Thomas was not with the other disciples the previous week when Jesus had appeared to them, pronounced peace upon them, and breathed the Spirit on them. For an entire week he was suffering with doubt, because he was not where he was supposed to be: in worship with the other disciples. How often is this true in our own lives. We make a million excuses for absenting ourselves from stated meetings of worship, and it only leads to the increasing of our doubts about our salvation and about the character of God and about the truthfulness of His Word. James says (4:8), “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you...purify your hearts, you double-minded.” We draw near to Him and to one another, and He will draw near to us.

B. We sometimes resist the apostolic testimony (v. 25)

Thomas made a ridiculous statement that unless he actually saw with his own eyes the emblems of Jesus’ sacrifice, he would “never believe.” What does that say about 2,000 years of Christian disciples following Thomas? Thomas is creating a false dichotomy in which he is saying we cannot be sure unless we are eyewitnesses. There were 500 eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ, but the rest of us have a certainty of our salvation and of the truth of the Gospel because of credible witnesses (the apostles) inspired by the Holy Spirit.

II. **Jesus ministers to doubters (vv. 26-27)**

Jesus does two main things in our text.

A. He comes to us in peace (v. 26)

Although Thomas absented himself from the previous week's worship service, Jesus comes again and says the same thing, "Peace be to you." J.C. Ryle says about this verse, "Our Lord has many weak children in his family, many dull pupils in his school, many raw soldiers in his army, many lame sheep in his flock. Yet he bears with them all and casts none away." Jude 1:22 teaches us, "And have mercy on those who doubt." Both Jesus and His disciples had mercy on Thomas and appeared to him on that night.

B. He calls upon us to believe (v. 27)

What a condescension we see here and what sovereign knowledge of our sins and needs. And what a challenge to all doubters like ourselves, "Do not disbelieve, but believe." Jesus is teaching Thomas and all of us to believe our beliefs and doubt our doubts. Augustine once prayed, "Lord, grant what thou wilt, but grant what thou commandest." The good news of this commandment is that since Jesus commands it, He will grant the grace to do it.

III. **Jesus' ministry to doubters transforms us (vv. 28-29)**

A. We worship Him (v. 28)

There are other confessions of disciples in the gospel accounts, but surely this is the highest of them all. Thomas attributes to the Lord Jesus the highest names in the Scriptures: Lord and God. Furthermore, he claims that Jesus is *my* Lord and *my* God. This is a personal profession of faith of the highest order. We know from tradition that Thomas eventually traveled to India, becoming the patron saint of that great subcontinent, by proclaiming the Gospel and planting churches in southern India. His life was truly transformed.

B. We receive Christ's blessing (v. 29)

Here Jesus makes it known to Thomas and to all the apostles that as blessed as they are as the first generation of believers in Christ, we are even more blessed because we do not see and yet believe. Peter later put it this way in his first epistle, "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory..." (1 Peter 1:8). We know that these truths are real because of evidence, credible testimony, rational deduction, but especially because of apostolic, biblical, divine testimony. We believe God's witness about Himself given to us by the apostolic testimony. We are blessed indeed.

We come to the Lord with our doubts, we ask Him to remove them, we walk away transformed.

Discussion Questions

1. How is doubt helpful to us in everyday life? How is it not helpful in our faith in Jesus Christ?
2. What are the most common causes for doubt?
3. What are the keys to removing our unwanted doubts?

4. How are our lives transformed when we begin to eliminate our doubts?

5. Since we are not eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus, how can we be sure of what we believe?

Going Deeper

1. Do you have recurring doubts in your spiritual life? What are they? How are they negatively affecting your relationship with Jesus Christ?

2. What steps can you take to remove your doubts?