

# A Touch of Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] As God enables us, let us turn again to this portion of scripture we've read in the gospel according to John and chapter 20. And we may read from verse 24.

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. 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.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands. And which hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.

[ 1 : 19 ] And be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus hith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Just one or two thoughts on this section of the scriptures.

The chapter begins with the account John gives of the sepulchre to which Mary came, Mary Magdalene, on the early morning of the first day of the week.

And obviously she had expected to find the Lord's body there. Because it says in Matthew 26, Mark, and Matthew 28, I should say, that they came prepared with ointments, so that they were going to anoint the Lord's body.

In other words, they were not expecting the sepulchre to be empty. They were not expecting the Lord to rise from the dead.

[ 2 : 55 ] And that despite the fact that on repeated occasions, the Lord had said that he not only was going to die, but that he was also going to rise from the dead.

And the women went to the grave to anoint the body. But we see also that the angel speaks to them in Matthew 28, verse 7.

That the angel speaks regarding what they ought to do with the situation that really surprised them. Matthew 28, verse 7, it says, Go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.

And behold, he goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him. Lo, I have told you. And they went to tell the disciples.

And when they told the disciples what had happened, it says in Luke 24, 11, that they felt that the women were telling idle tales.

[ 4 : 22 ] Isn't that an amazing thing? Men who had heard on more than one occasion from Jesus' own lips that he was going to rise from the dead, and now the angel has told the women to go and tell the disciples.

And it says there that they took the women's news of the resurrection as idle tales. And then we see also in the experience of the two on the road to Emmaus, in Luke 24, in Luke 24, and at verse 25, Jesus says to them, O fools, and slow of heart to understand or to believe what the prophets have written.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and then entered into his glory. They had slow hearts, as it were.

There's a medical condition called a slow heart. And obviously a person who's suffering from that kind of condition isn't able to perform activities like the person whose heart is beating at a normal pace.

And that's exactly the situation these men were in on the road to Emmaus. They were believers. But it's as if their heart was slow to take in all that the prophets had spoken about Christ's death and Christ's resurrection.

[ 6 : 12 ] And when the Lord in this particular chapter comes and enters the room where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, it says that in verse 19, Jesus came and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

And when he had so said, he showed them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. The Lord's presence answered their questions.

The Lord's words brought peace because he said, Peace be unto you. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. And just as I comment on verse 23, whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained.

That is a reference to the preacher of the gospel giving forth what the word of God says regarding forgiveness of sins and regarding punishment for unrepented sins.

[ 7 : 50 ] That's basically what it's talking about because he is sending them forth as ambassadors of the gospel and we are going to preach forgiveness of sins to those who repent and those who do not repent their sins are retained and they suffer the consequences of unrepented sins.

But then coming particularly now to verse 24, against that background Thomas, one of the twelve called Didymus was not with them when Jesus came.

One of the twelve Thomas called Didymus. Now he appears in the list, Thomas appears in the list of disciples in the gospel of Matthew chapter 10 verse 3 and he is the seventh named in the list of disciples there.

And in Mark 3 18 he is the eighth disciple named in the list there. And in Luke 6 15 again he is the eighth disciple mentioned in that list.

I don't attach any significance to that except that obviously he was more in the background than some of the other disciples who probably were more vocal than he was like Peter was and John was.

[ 9 : 25 ] Thomas was a true disciple but he was more of a low key disciple and you find that in the church in every congregation you go to.

There are higher profile believers and people who prefer the background situation and in a sense I believe that was to be said about Thomas but there are a couple of things Thomas says that come before us.

For example in the Gospel of John chapter 11 when the message of the death of Lazarus comes to Jesus and Jesus said that he was going to go back there to where they had been and where there was much danger and Thomas says let us go that we may die with him that we may die with Jesus he was willing to follow him as it were even although that might mean for him that he was going to be put to death by the enemies of the Gospel that's the kind of man Thomas was and then also we see in John 14 Thomas is mentioned again and Jesus has just said to them I am going to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself so that where I am there you will be also and

Thomas says Lord we don't know where you're going and how can we know the way it's as if he had questions about almost everything that came his way how do we know let us go and we're going to die with him and so on so he was a man and they call him doubting Thomas well we see here something of his experience verse 24 he was first of all a man who had the misfortune of not being present with the rest of the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them that's the first thing I want to highlight he had the misfortune of not being present with the others when Jesus first made himself known after his resurrection secondly he had the blessing eight days later it says in verse 26 of

Jesus inviting him on the basis of what he himself had said that he would only believe if he was able to put his fingers into the mark of the nails and thrust his hand into his side only then would he believe and Jesus graciously invites him to do exactly what he asked that's the second thing Jesus gracious invitation and thirdly we see the wonderful confession he makes Thomas said my Lord and my God and fourthly and finally the words of encouragement from verse 29 because you have seen me you have believed blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed just one or two words on each of these headings first of all the misfortune or mistake or whatever that was seen in his life in that he was not present with the disciples when the

[ 13 : 33 ] Lord first made himself known to them after his resurrection now I'm not sure what the problem was with Thomas that he wasn't present with the rest of the disciples on that first occasion I don't know maybe there was a legitimate reason for him to be missing from the group maybe there was but maybe there wasn't maybe like some people rather than come to church he just stayed at home and there are some people like that they're not really bothered whether they appear every time the church opens for a service some people are they're fervent in their attendance on the means of grace and that's I think what the scripture says to us that we have every opportunity we have and if it's possible at all to come under the sound of the preaching of the gospel because if we're not we like

Thomas might miss out on a blessing this is what happened to him he was not present with them and Jesus came in and the door shut and he said peace be unto you well in the middle of such a situation where they felt so threatened by the Jews that they gathered in a room and the doors were locked they must have been petrified as to what might happen to them because their master had been put to death he had been buried and the question was who next is going to be arrested and put to death so they gathered together for fear of the Jews but in the midst of that fear the Lord came in and he said peace be unto you what an amazing word he spoke peace be unto you who speaks that word it's the prince of peace the man

Christ Jesus who made peace by the blood of his cross who made reconciliation who made atonement between his people and a holy God and he with all the authority of his mediatorship he says peace be unto you he commands peace upon them and when he had said so he showed them his hands and his side it's as if he is saying to them well this is me and this is what it cost me to bring peace to you I was wounded for your transgressions I was bruised for your iniquities the justice meant of your peace was upon me and by my stripes you are healed he showed them the proof as it were the paid check stub if you can say that the cancellation of the bill and he said this is what it cost and the peace is now used then were the disciples glad when they saw the

Lord and then he commands them to go and preach the gospel but then coming particularly to Thomas that Thomas said except I see these hands that have the wounds in them and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side I will not believe I will not believe well isn't it amazing for one who obviously had seen the Lord's power on a number of occasions before this he had been present at the raising of Lazarus from the dead probably present at the raising of the widow's son at Nain from the dead he had seen the

Lord Jesus power in ruling the waves at the sea of Galilee with a word commanding the wind and the waves peace be still and now he brings things down to this well I'll only believe that he rose from the dead if I'm able to put my hands into the mark of the nails and thrust my hand into his side only then will I believe surely the Lord had given ample proof of his power before this while this man's faith obviously was under attack this man's trust in the Lord Jesus was not what it ought to have been but in our own situation often we find that we disappoint ourselves in that we aren't really able to rise up to the situation that's required of us what I mean by that is that we are afraid to enter into a full commitment to do for the

[ 19 : 45 ] Lord and to trust him with all the details that are required in what we are asked to do we go out in fear wondering will the Lord help is the Lord able to help me in this particular situation well this man he was full of that kind of doubt but coming thirdly to what the Lord invites him to do after eight days the disciples were within and Thomas was with them then came Jesus the doors being shut and stood in the midst and said peace be unto you we remember that Jesus' body was on the other side of the resurrection and as Professor

MacLeod used to say to us in the college that the Lord's resurrected body is in a different realm of physics altogether it's a spiritual body it is not a body like we mortals have or he had a true body and a reasonable soul but after his death and resurrection his body had different qualities and he is able to enter a room without actually having to open the door that's what I believe these words mean and if you think also of the large stone that had been rolled to the mouth of the tomb of the sepulchre the scripture says that it's an angel from heaven that came and rolled that stone away that was after the

Lord had risen from the dead because that angel that sat on the stone said to the women come and see the place where the Lord lay he's no longer here he's no longer here he's able to pass through the door we don't understand that but we see that the Lord here has come into the room and then he knows exactly the problem that Thomas has he highlights exactly the reservations that Thomas has spoken about on a previous occasion and the Lord knows exactly the reservations we have and the limitations we have and he is able to come and meet us at the very point of our need however minute however small however hidden it might be from others he knows exactly what word to speak in season he knows exactly where to put his finger as it were on our circumstances in order to help to strengthen to encourage and this is what it says here he said to Thomas didn't say to any of the others he said to Thomas reach hither thy finger behold my hands reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless but believing he wasn't without faith but his faith was so eclipsed and so weakened that it's as if he was overwhelmed by doubts and Jesus said do this

I remember being in a gathering years and years ago and they were talking about this particular situation and an old man an old elder from back he was talking about the situation and he said that when Thomas was given this invitation or command put your finger here and your hand into my side that he didn't actually need to do it because the Lord's presence there and the evidence was before Thomas' eyes that indeed this was the Lord his own Lord and that's what he says my Lord and my God he is the one that I want to follow he is the one that I commit myself to he is the one that I lean on he is the one that I trust with every detail of my life for time and for eternity that's what these words mean when he says my Lord he wants to come under the jurisdiction and under the control and under the lordship of Jesus

Christ who died and goes again and every believer wants to do that and every believer by grace does that my Lord and my God he also says my God I wonder why that is said Jesus Christ certainly is his Lord but one of the commentators says well Jesus proved to him by his absolute knowledge of the reservations he had and the stipulations he had made that he wanted to put his finger into the mark of the nails and hand into his side and so on it's as if the Lord had gone ahead of him knowing exactly what his situation was and God is all knowing there is nothing that he does not know and that is still through with ourselves remember when

[ 26 : 25 ] Abraham's servant was in the wilderness and the little boy was dying of thirst and the Lord spoke to her and she said Lord you are seeing me you see me and I think this is true here regarding Thomas he knew he was in the presence of the all seeing God and he acknowledged him as his own God and as his own Lord and Saviour isn't this true with all of God's people they know that they are in the presence of the all seeing one David the psalmist in psalm 139 knew that very well Lord thou hast searched me and known me you know my sitting down my rising up all my thoughts afar to thee are known does matter where I go in the darkness of the night the night will be as light the light of day because you see me where I am and then the encouragement to us all in verse 29

Thomas because thou hast seen me thou hast believed blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed those who have not seen yet have believed who were they who did not had not seen him well think of all the Old Testament saints think of those to whom the Lord had given promises regarding the coming Messiah in the Old Testament if you think of David himself if you think of the psalm that he has written there psalm 16 Research David knew through the

Holy Spirit's Spirit's enlightening of a new of the resurrection glory and the glories of heaven. Think also of the number of people mentioned, men and women, in the epistle to the Hebrews and chapter 11. People who had been given promises regarding the glory to come and the Christ to come and they died without having actually seen the Christ promised to them.

You see that at the very end of chapter 11. They died without having seen but they nevertheless believed. And then of course since Jesus has come and gone back to heaven none of us have seen him with our eyes. Like Thomas saw him. Like the disciples saw him. But we nevertheless see him in the scriptures.

We see him like one of the commentators says through the eyes of the apostles. They tell us what Jesus is like. They tell us who he is. They tell us what he's done. They tell us what he's about to do and going to do for his people. And that's the Jesus that the Holy Spirit reveals to us in such a way that our minds and hearts are enlightened to see his glory.

[ 30 : 21 ] We beheld his glory, the apostle said, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. When the apostle Peter is writing, first epistle, chapter 1, he says this to those whom he is writing about Jesus, whom having not seen, you love. You haven't seen him with your own eyes as I have seen him, Peter might say. Nevertheless, you've heard about him. And by the Holy Spirit's enabling, you have committed yourself to him. And you're enabled to love him and yield to him as your Lord and as your God.

Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.

Faith is a grace given by God. And I'm not sure if I quoted this recently with you, but there's a picture in the Song of Solomon of the Church of Christ in chapter 8. And the question is, who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? The people of God lean upon their Lord and their God.

They trust him. They trust him. They believe the word about him. And they take him at his word. And they have no hope for eternity apart from him. He is their hope and their stay.

And Thomas, that day, had a real lesson taught to him. And his grace was strengthened because he was given the blessing of a stronger faith than he had had before. May God bless these thoughts to us.

[ 32 : 47 ] Amen. Amen. Help us, Lord, this evening anew to praise your great name for the scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments.

And they speak to us of our living and a mighty Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

And we pray this evening that we might have a stronger faith, a faith whereby we will lean upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

We pray for your blessing to be upon the congregation here. And as we heard, we pray that you would lead them to a man of your own choosing, to be an under-shepherd with them, leading them and guiding them in the things of God.

We pray for your blessing upon us now as we sing your praise in conclusion. And forgive every sin. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We'll bring your worship to a close at this time, singing in Psalm number 30, the 30th Psalm.

[ 34 : 19 ] Psalm. And verses 8 to 12.

Thanks. Amen. 1. 1. 2. I cause it to ascend, My humble supplication I to the Lord did send.

What profit is there in my blood When I go down to pit? Shall unto thee the dust give praise? Thy truth declare shall it, Hear, Lord, have mercy, help me, Lord.

Thou turn it hast my sadness to dancing, Yea, my sack cloth loosed, and girded me with gladness, That sing thy praise my glory may, And never silent be, O Lord my God, forevermore I will give thanks to thee.

Psalm 30 from verse 8 to the end Wherefore unto the Lord my cry. I cause it to ascend, My humble supplication, I turn to the Lord my cry.

[ 35 : 29 ] I cause it to ascend, My humble supplication, I turn to the Lord's end. My humble supplication, I turn to the Lord's end.

For profit is there in my blood When I go down to pit?

When I go down to pit? Shall unto thee the just-good praise?

Thy truth declare shall it. Dear Lord, have mercy, Help me, Lord.

The turn it hast my sadness To dance, singing, my sack cloth loosed, and girded me with falsehood fail.

[ 36 : 58 ] If promise be thyorn God's sake thy praise My ashes Have mercy ever heard.

glory be and ever ever silent be O Lord my God forever more I will give thanks to thee  
Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all, now and forever more. Amen.