

FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT

NO. 2721

A SERMON

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

John 20:29

WE count those people blessed indeed who lived in our Savior's day and saw Him when He dwelt here among men. And truly blessed were their eyes, for they saw, and their ears, for they heard, what kings and prophets had long desired to see and to hear, yet were not so privileged. But we who now believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ have a blessing superior to theirs, for the benediction of the text is not to those who saw and believed, but to those who “have not seen, and yet have believed.”

No doubt Thomas was highly favored when his Lord said unto him, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.” This was an act of very remarkable condescension on Christ's part. I can scarcely conceive that any other of the twelve apostles was more tenderly treated than was this doubting disciple. Nevertheless, though Thomas was greatly privileged, there is a superior blessing, as his Master told him—and that blessing, I hope, belongs to many of us—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

How often have you said in your heart, “They are indeed blessed up yonder, for they behold Christ face to face. Their eyes do see the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off.” Yes, beloved, they are truly blessed—none can gainsay that, for John heard the voice from heaven saying unto him, “Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

There is indescribable bliss for all those who behold their Savior's face and who wear His name in their foreheads. Yet, dear friends, think not that all blessedness is reserved for the glorified, for we have much here also. It almost seems as if Christ had commenced to preach again His Sermon on the Mount, or to add another beatitude to those He then announced—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” We must wait for the blessing of sight till the blessed by and by, in the land of the hereafter, but just now, it will be quite enough to fill us to the very brim with joy if we can take in the full meaning of this message of the Master.

This blessedness belongs to us who have not seen, and yet have believed—not to all here present, if there are any who are still in unbelief. The Lord have mercy on you, dear friends, and bring you out of that state of death and deadly danger, giving you faith in Him even now! Oh, that you might begin to believe in Him this very hour!

But I thank God that there are many of us who do believe in Jesus and who have received life through His name. And though we have not at present seen Him, yet He declares that we are truly blessed.

I. So, the first thing I shall have to say is, PARTAKERS OF THIS BLESSEDNESS, DO NOT LET US TRY TO DIMINISH IT.

We have a blessing, peculiar and singular, through not having seen, and yet having believed, so let us not try to diminish it, first, *by pining for a voice, or a vision, or a revelation*—something which is like sight—so that it could not then be so well said of us that we have not seen. Have you never had this kind of thought, when thou hast been living by faith alone?

Perhaps you have said to yourself, “Oh, but—but if God would in some way reveal Himself to me so that my very senses might assist my faith. If I might be hidden away in some cleft of the rock and might see the skirts of JEHOVAH’s robe. Or if I might hear some divine voice but whisper that I am His—then I would indeed rejoice and never doubt again.

“If I might see some miracle wrought, something that I was sure was the finger of God, if I might get near enough to God to be for life impressed with what I saw—whether it was a burning bush or some wayfaring man whom I might entertain as an angel unawares—or even if it were some terrible judgment, yet if I could but feel certain that God had come near to me, so that I should never doubt again, what a grand thing it would be!”

Brother, do not ask for anything of the kind, do not wish to have it even if you could, for “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” You want to see, you are pining for something which is practically the same as sight. You do not feel content to swim in the pure sea of faith, but your Lord will not give you what you childishly crave.

After all, it is only vanity that you are pining for, so He will deny it to you and will say, “My child, instead of wanting to see, believe, trust, follow Me in the dark, for it is better for you not to see. Even if you did see and believe, yet would you have obtained only an inferior boon, for the higher blessing, the cream of blessing belongs to those who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Next, do not try to diminish the blessing, when you are in trouble, *by asking for some remarkable and special providence to open to you.* “Oh!” says someone, “I have asked for that many a time.” Well, you may, if you feel led to do so, but still, believe in God if no particular and almost miraculous providence is manifested. God’s providence is always at work and we make mistakes in putting down some things as providences, and others as not providences.

You escape in a railway accident and say that is a providence. Yes, but it is just as much a providence that you go to town six days a week and there is no accident. You are supplied with bread when you are out of work and in need—that is a providence. Yes, but it is just as much a providence when you do not get out of work and do not fall into need.

I do not say that you are not to pray for providence to help you, but I do urge you not to be continually pining after those singularities of providence which are picked out of some men’s biographies, of which more than is right may be made. Do not say, “I expect God to do for me some wonderful, strange thing, or else I cannot trust Him.”

No, “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”—they who, through the whole of their lives, know that the right hand of God has been leading them steadily on. Though there is nothing they could write about and put down as a sort of semi-miracle, yet they believe that all things are working together for good for them, and will bring out divine purposes fraught with love and grace.

Again, do not diminish the blessing *by craving after ecstatic experiences.* It is a very delightful thing, you know, to have your soul made “like the chariots of Ammi-nadib,” and to be carried right away with holy delights. Such sacred joys have been given to many saints—even Paul had to write, “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth”—and we do look upon some of those happy seasons with special delight, but we must not say, “I cannot trust in God because I have no such experiences. I cannot rely upon His promises or cling to the atoning sacrifice, because I am denied these high spiritual joys.”

Oh, no! Trust Him even if it is all dark around you. Rely upon Him though you cannot see a star in the night. If, like Paul, for a day and a night thou hast been in the deep. Or if, through many days and nights, neither sun nor moon shall appear, still trust in the Lord. Though you have not even had any spiritual joy arising out of the conscious possession of divine life in your soul, still cling to Him whose everlasting arms have never yet failed any clinging soul, and whose lovingkindnesses and tender mercies are just as sure in the darkest night as in the brightest day.

There is another way in which we may diminish this blessing of faith without sight and that is, *by always demanding clear arguments to answer every objection that may be raised.* Some of us have lived

long enough to have been informed, a great many times, that the Gospel has suffered most serious injury through the assaults of some learned man who has made a wonderful discovery which it is supposed will undermine the very foundations of revealed religion.

When we were boys, the great arguments against the Scriptures used to be founded upon stones dug out of the bowels of the earth. Geology had come up and therefore Christianity was to go down! Since then, we have seen a great number of remarkable things come and go—and some dear souls who have been very timid, have been considerably shaken and troubled.

Well now, beloved friends, let us hear our Lord saying to us, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,” and let us come to this point—that we know what we know, and it is divinely fixed in our soul that it is so, and therefore, if an objection is raised against what we believe, we feel certain that it goes to be answered.

It may not always be our duty to answer it—we may not have the special knowledge that is necessary for that task. We have a proverb which says that “fools set stools for wise men to tumble over” and any fool could throw a stone into a well, which a very wise man could not get out again. And nowadays, it seems to be the business of a great many learned fools to find difficulties for wise men to answer.

We have something else to do beside answering them. If you try to satisfy every man who starts a new theory, you will have nothing to do but to answer objections. One says that there is no such thing as matter—but if I prick myself with a pin and the blood flows out, I do not need any other argument to convince me. I hope that you, dear friends, have made up your minds that certain things are matters of conviction to you and that you will not dispute about them.

For instance, the presence of God the Holy Spirit in your soul must be so truly a matter of personal consciousness that, whatever argument may be urged against it, you may say, “Well, I may not be able to answer your argument, but I know that there is a reply to it. I have not seen, yet I have believed. Though I could not form a syllogism, nor argue upon the matter to your satisfaction, yet I know within myself that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

“I know, too, that He is my Father, that He has begotten in me a new life, which I never had till His blessed Spirit wrought it in me. I know that He has lifted me up into a new world and has given me to see and to know what I never even dreamed of until I came to trust in Him—so let that stand for my answer.” It may not satisfy an objector, but it will satisfy yourself.

Yet again, we may diminish this blessing *by being overanxious for success in our work*. We ought to be very anxious to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, but blessed is the man who goes on faithfully preaching the Gospel, even if he does not immediately see souls converted, and who believes in the power of the Gospel, even though for the moment it is not manifest unto him.

Blessed, too, is the Sunday school teacher who has not yet seen one child in his class brought to the Savior, but who still believes that there will be many, and who keeps on teaching them, and crying to God for their salvation.

Just once more, we must try not to diminish this blessing *by wanting always to have the concurrent faith of others to support our own*. There are some people who can believe only while everybody else all round them believes—if cheerful friends come in and encourage them, they feel bright and happy. That is a kind of seeing by proxy—somebody else sees, so you believe.

But blessed is he who has not seen, even with other people’s eyes, and yet has believed. Blessed is he who says, “I can stand alone. If there is nobody else who believes this truth, I know it is true, for I found it in the Scriptures. If everybody else will deny it, I affirm its truthfulness and I rest in it, for I am sure about it. ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar’—not merely some men liars, but every man an liar, if he contradicts the God of truth. Let them all go whatever way they will—I stand steadfastly for God and my faith in Him shall not be shaken.”

This is a blessed way of living and I pray that you, dear friends, may not rob yourselves of this benediction of our Lord even in the slightest degree, but that you may be resolved to claim as your own the beatitude in our text.

II. Secondly, and briefly, DO NOT LET US THINK THAT THIS BLESSEDNESS IS UNATTAINABLE.

If we are, indeed, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us believe that this benediction is ours and that it is possible for us to believe, though we do not see. For, observe, that *God deserves to be believed*. Apart from every other consideration, His own personal character is such that He ought to be believed. If, my brethren, God had spoken to us in the Scriptures and revealed a truth which had no analogy in nature—which was not supported by the judgment of learned men and to which our own experience seemed to be a contradiction—yet, nevertheless and notwithstanding, God must be believed.

If every morsel of evidence that ever came in our way had to be placed in the opposite scale, and we had nothing but “God hath said it,” to put into this one, the fact that God has said it ought, to every loyal heart, to weigh down all the rest. Though you have not seen, surely you are never going to compare your poor eyes with God. Though you have never heard, surely you are not going to set the evidence of your eyes against the declaration of God who cannot lie.

For my part, I am determined that if all my senses were to contradict God, I would deny every one of them and sooner believe myself to be out of my right mind than believe that God could lie. And I desire to feel that, in every emotion of my spirit, every throb of my heart, every thought of my brain, and everything that is contrary to the plainly-revealed truth of God, I will count myself a fool and a madman—and I will reckon God to be wise and true.

If we can exercise such faith as that—and I am sure God well-deserves it, for the infinite Creator, the ever-blessed Faithful and True, cannot be guilty of falsehood and cannot even err—so, if we trust Him as He ought to be trusted, then shall we realize the blessedness of which our text speaks.

Further, dear friends, look along the whole line of history, *note how the saints have trusted in the Lord*, and see whether He has not been true to them. Trace the inspired record from the days of Noah to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and see what it will prove to you. Has He said anything and has He not done it? Has He promised and then has He ever failed to keep His word? Has He threatened and has He not carried out the threatening?

Look through the biographies of all who have trusted Him. Has He deceived any one of them? Has it ever been shown that it is a foolish thing to believe God? Was there ever a man who truly trusted in the unseen JEHOVAH and who, by doing so, was made a fool of? Find him out, if you can—in a Bible story or anywhere else—the man who really believed in God and afterwards came back saying that he had believed a fiction, or that, if God existed at all, He had broken His promise and deluded the man who relied upon it. No, there is no such case, and there never shall be one. The whole roll of the past confirms the faithfulness of God.

I appeal also to you who have believed in God and ask *if your own experience has not warranted your faith*. Brethren, ever since you have known the Lord and up till now, how has He treated you? Has He ever given you any occasion for distrusting Him? Rightly looked at, has there even once occurred, in the whole of your personal or family history, anything that reasonably permitted you to suspect the truthfulness of God?

O brethren, I have sometimes called myself ten thousand, thousand fools in one for ever doubting the faithfulness of my God. When I look back over my own life, it always seems as remarkable—to me, at any rate—as anything that has ever been found in the pages of fiction. Oh, how wonderfully and how graciously has God dealt with me! What do I not owe to His faithfulness and truth? Doubt You, my Lord? I could doubt all except You—and doubt myself most of all. Cannot all of you, beloved, who love the Lord, say the same?

Some of thou hast been through deep waters. You have been very sick, or very poor, or perhaps you have lost many dear relatives and friends. You have been greatly cast down in spirit. You have gone

through fire and through water. Well, now, how has the Lord dealt with you in all these experiences? I know that you have found His mercy to be—

“Ever faithful, ever sure.”

Well, then, He deserves to be trusted although you cannot see Him. You know what kind of a man he is of whom we say, “Trust him? Yes, I would trust him as far as I could see him, but no further.” But what a dishonor you would put upon your God if you could not trust Him any further than that. Indeed, that is no trust at all, it is sight.

Do not, therefore begin to doubt God because you cannot see Him, and because, to reason and sense, difficulties seem to intervene, but bravely trust Him when you see Him not, for He well-deserves to be believed. The history of His whole church proves that He is worthy to be trusted and your own personal history proves it, too.

III. I have spoken but briefly upon that part of our subject, although much more might be said upon it. But I want to devote a little more time to one other point. DO NOT LET ANY OF US MISS THIS BLESSING THROUGH NOT SEEING THE GROUND OF IT.

It is a blessed thing to trust God when you cannot trace Him—to believe when you cannot see. For, first, *this is a sure mark of a spiritual and renewed mind*. There were some who saw Christ who, nevertheless cried, “Away with him, crucify him.” There were some who saw Christ and who could not help perceiving that there was a wonderful power in Him, yet they did not believe in Him and they were not saved by Him. There were persons who saw Christ, and who even in some sense believed in Him, yet who believed not with true saving faith. But if any of you who have not seen Him, really believe in Him, this is the evidence that you are the children of God.

Let me remind you of that description of the people of God which is given by Peter in his first epistle, the first chapter, and the eighth and ninth verses, “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: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

So that the people who have received the salvation of their souls are those who love the One they have never seen—and who even rejoice in Him whom they do not see. You may conclude that you are truly a child of God—you may make certain of your election and of your adoption into the Lord’s family if you can truly say, “I am one of those who have not seen the Lord Jesus and yet I have believed in Him. I can say to Him,—

*‘I love Thee, dearest Lord! and will,
Unseen, but not unknown.’”*

Next, this kind of man is indeed blessed *because, believing when he has not seen is a proof that his heart is right towards God*. I do not know any better evidence that two persons are agreed with one another than that they fully trust each other. If I have a friend in whom I so implicitly trust that I do not want any evidence, there should be no writing between him and me. He shall not need to say that what he says is true—if he only says it, then I am certain of the truth of it. That is because my friend and I are on such good terms with one another.

And when you trust God in spite of all outward appearances and surrounding circumstances, it is a comfortable proof to yourself that you are on good terms with God, that you are walking in sweet fellowship with Him and it is one of the most blessed facts in your whole history.

Perhaps God is chastening you just now and your heart is very heavy. There are many things which seem to discourage you, but still, you can say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Ah! my dear friend, you are amongst the blessed of the Lord. Ay, among the very choicely blessed ones, for it is clear

that there is no quarrel between you and your God. You have been reconciled to Him and you are walking with Him, even though you are walking in the dark.

I like that saying of the old Scotchwoman though it sounds strange. When someone said to her, “Perhaps, after all, God’s promises will not be true to you and you will be lost.” “Well,” she answered, “if I am lost, He will lose more than I shall.” It seems a strange thing for anyone to say, but the good woman meant that the Lord would lose His honor and His character for truthfulness if He suffered one to be lost who had trusted in Him. That showed that she was on good terms with God and understood Him—and all such people are greatly blessed.

Again, dear friends, those who believe Christ, whom they have not seen, are blessed *because their character and conduct in this respect are most acceptable with God*. I do not know anything which gratifies a man more than to be implicitly trusted. There are not many of us who are worthy of such confidence, but when people do absolutely trust us, we feel that they have given us all the honor that they can possibly put upon us. No flattery can ever equal that warm glowing encomium which is passed upon a man when we put entire confidence in him. And our Lord delights for us to just give ourselves up to trust in Him in that fashion.

I do not believe that the seraphim in heaven praise the Lord so much, in all their hallelujahs, as a poor tried child of God does when he trusts himself entirely in his Heavenly Father’s hands. And it seems to me that, the darker the night is, and the heavier the burden is, and the more crushed the spirit is, if we can fully trust Him then, the sweeter is the music of our resignation and the more acceptable is the homage which we pay to God. Ah! though You do break me up until I am small as the grains of March dust, and though You blow upon me as with a hurricane that threatens to drive me away, yet shall every atom of my being trust in You, and believe You, O my God!

If we can carry out that resolution, it will honor God and be acceptable to Him in the highest degree. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Is it not strange that the eternal God can ever be “pleased” with us? It is a wonderful thing, certainly, that we poor creatures should, by any means, be able to give pleasure to the infinitely-happy God—yet so we do when we trust Him.

Again, you shall find that the man who believes without seeing is truly blessed *because that faith brings comfort to his own soul*. I desire to bear my own testimony concerning this matter. I have never been so happy, in my whole life, as when I have had nothing to trust to but God. Those times in which I have been flung into the sea and been compelled to swim, because I could not touch the bottom anywhere, have been the most joyous times to my own heart.

If I had to select the choicest hours of my life—those which I would like to have over again—they would be those times in which I may have been thought rash and imprudent, but in which I have been enabled just to believe God and to leave everything in His hands. At such times, I have seen the iron swim, I have seen the Lord’s hand working marvelously in the midst of the earth, and it has given me the utmost delight.

Now, is not every Christian here able to say just that? It is not your happiest time when the barn is full and when the vats run over the brim, for, sometimes, thou hast been satisfied with the abundance of your earthly mercies, but your happiest time has been when there was only the last handful of meal at the bottom of that barrel and you had to scrape it up to make a cake for the prophet—yet there was always enough to make a cake.

And when the oil only dribbled out of the cruse, and you thought it would soon be dried up, yet the Lord told you it would never be exhausted, and it never was. I think it is better to have that barrel of meal, and that cruse of oil, than it would be to have the biggest vat of oil you ever saw, and the largest granaries full of corn, so long as you have this promise for your motto—“The Lord will provide.”

If the Lord will provide, you cannot have a better provider. He is not in the habit, as the God of providence, of doing anything stingingly. He fills the stores of the widows and orphans, and feeds them well. And when He feeds His own children, He feeds them well. Happy is that man, and blessed in his own heart is his sense of intense comfort, who can say, “I cannot see, but I do believe.”

There is another reason why such a person is blessed, and that is that *he is having formed in him a grand character*. It is a poor character that lives only on what it sees—that is the beast's character—it is quite satisfied as long as its eyes can perceive the pasture. There is no great character that can ever come to a man who has no faith.

The heroes among men are all men of faith—even those who are heroes concerning common matters, the heroes of patriotism—though it may not always be faith in God that they possess, yet is it faith of some sort that braces them up and makes them superior to the doubters all around them. No man could be a William Tell who had not firm confidence, and certainly, no man could have been a Martin Luther who had not full and entire trust in his God.

It is a wondrous education to a man to be compelled to trust his God—to be driven right out from paddling along the shore in his little canoe, by a big rolling wave which carries him right out to sea—and there he is taught to be a mariner who can brave the tempest and laugh at the hurricane. We should always remain children, and have to be carried in our mother's arms, in long clothes, if we had not trials and troubles. God often hides Himself in order to teach us to trust Him more—and so we grow to be men, God helping us.

And lastly, let me remind you that *we are very likely coming to a time when we shall need to believe without the use of our eyes*. If our Lord Jesus Christ does not soon come, some of us shall die. And if your faith depends on your sight, what will you do when your eyes are in the grave? They are going to be there—you will not be able to carry a single particle of this wonderful telescopic, microscopic, optical arrangement of yours with you to heaven.

I have seen many of my dear friends die and I know that their eyes were still in their bodies, for I looked into them and helped to close them. They did not take them away with them, so how do they get on, now that they have no eyes? I have seen their ears left behind and laid in their coffins—and all their senses have gone, like their seeing and hearing. And if they could not believe without their senses, what would they do in the disembodied state where they now are before the throne of God?

Why, they commune with Christ without the intervention of the flesh. Then, do so now, beloved. Do not always be wanting to use these poor eyeballs, these dim glasses here, for they do not see much. There are angels, in this place, flying to and fro while I am preaching. I cannot see them—it is my eyes that make me blind—but I shall see them when those eyes are gone.

My Lord is also here. I know He is, for He gave His promise of old that He would be, and He is sure to keep His word. But I cannot see Him—and that is the fault of these poor eyes of mine. When they are gone, then I shall see Him. When I get rid of the encumbrances of eyes and ears,—

***“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below;
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”***

What should I do if I could not draw near to God without my eyes and ears and hands, without touch and taste, when I am so soon to live in a world where there will be no hands, or eyes, or ears, until the resurrection morning? Then we shall get our bodies back again, but until then, if we are to be blessed at all, it must be in the way our Lord says in the text—by faith without sight.

So, brethren, if you want to enjoy great blessings, if you wish to lead a happy life, and to die a triumphant death, if you would have a glorious interregnum between death and the coming of Christ, if you would see your Master's face with acceptance in the day of His appearing, ask that this blessing may be yours—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Now I close when I have just said to you who do not know whether you are converted or not, but are waiting until you have some wonderful impression, or until you hear a voice down in the garden, or until

you have a striking dream, or see an apparition, and so on—all that rubbish will be of no use to you. Just believe in the Lord Jesus Christ without any of those things.

You are a sinner and Jesus Christ is a Savior—so come and trust Him. Though you see Him not, yet is He to be found by you if you seek Him with all your heart. Therefore, wait for none of these things that I have mentioned, but come and trust Him—and blessed shall you be in believing although you cannot see Him. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 20:19-31

Verse 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, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

He has not risen from the tomb many hours before we find Him thus coming to His disciples. His love to them was too great to permit Him to be long absent from them. He had said to them, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me." So He kept His word.

He stood in their midst and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." He is the Lord and Giver of peace just as much now as He was then. Oh, that He would speak peace to the hearts of all His people now! May each believing soul among you have a deep peace! May all your troublous thoughts come to an end and every anxious mind be calmed! Peace! Blessed peace! Oh, that the Spirit of peace would breathe it upon us all! "Peace be unto you."

20. *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side.*

These were the marks to help their recognition of Him. These were the memorials to excite their gratitude. These, too, were the tokens of His condescension, for a man does not show His wounds to any but to those whom He loves. "He shewed unto them his hands and his side." You cannot see that sight, brethren, but you can meditate upon it. Think how He gave those blessed hands to the nails and that precious side to the soldier's spear—and, as you think of them, let your love flow forth unto Him who suffered thus for you.

20. *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

I should think they were glad. They had been afraid of the Jews, but they forgot that fear when they saw the Lord. I suppose that, at first, when He suddenly appeared in their midst, they were afraid of Him. But now there was first a sacred calm and then there was a ripple of holy gladness on the surface of the still waters of their souls.

We cannot see Him, brethren, with these eyes of ours, but by faith we can behold Him, so we may have gladness even as the disciples had. We ought to be the happiest people in all the world, because Christ is ours and is spiritually with us as He promised that He would be.

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

"You are to go forth and to bless the world, even as I have done. My Father has sent Me and 'even so send I you.' You are to be My delegates to carry on My service—My commissioned officers to go forth to conflict and to conquest in My name."

22-23. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

This is as much as for Christ to say, "I will back up your ministry. When you preach that men are condemned for sin of which they have not repented, I will make it to be so as a matter of fact. When you declare pardon to all who trust in My precious blood, I will make it so. That truth, which you preach, shall have My seal of approval set upon it. My power shall go forth with your proclamation of the truth,

so that it shall be seen that you are not proclaiming a fiction. When you preach My Gospel, I will remit the sins of all who believe it. And when you pronounce sentence of condemnation on such as remain in unbelief, I will confirm your declaration!”

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

Very likely, loving Jesus, as he evidently did, very much, Thomas was broken-hearted when he found that his Master was dead. So, when his fellow disciples told him that Jesus was alive, he could not believe it, he felt that the news was too good to be true. He had fallen into a fit of despondency and got away, as broken-hearted, depressed people often do, trying to get quite alone, when Christian company would be one of the best ways of finding comfort and solace. So, “Thomas was not with them when Jesus came.”

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.*

“We have seen the Lord. There is no mistake about the matter, for we have all seen Him.” And thus, with loving, anxious desire, they tried to cheer him and to make him participate in the gladness which they themselves had enjoyed. Dear friends, always look after your weak brethren. If there is a Thomas who is depressed and sad, and who therefore shuns you, do not shun him, but find him out and try to tell him what you have learned by way of comfort for your own heart. Perhaps God will use it to comfort him also.

25. *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.*

Thomas should not have said that, because after all, it was not true. I do not suppose that he did put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into Christ’s side, yet he did believe. We sometimes say a great deal that would have been far better left unsaid, and especially when our spirit is depressed, it is a token of wisdom to feel, “We are hardly in a condition of mind in which we can speak as we ought, so we had better remain silent.”

26. *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them:*

That is better. His love brought him out, you see, away from himself. And it often happens that by getting a man away from himself, we get him away from his worst enemy.

26. *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

His first salutation, after His resurrection, was such a choice one that there could not be a better, so He repeated it when He appeared the second time. Peace is so rich a blessing that even the Divine Master can say nothing sweeter to His faithful followers. So again He says to them, “Peace be unto you.”

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.*

Our dear and condescending Master would give to His feeble, and somewhat petulant disciple, all the proofs he had himself asked to have. He shall have evidence clear as noonday if he must have it. Thomas, however, as I suppose, was wise enough not to accept the gracious offer of his Lord. Sometimes it is wise not to take what God may put in our way. You remember how Balaam was allowed to go with the men sent unto him by Balak, and he did so, yet it would have been much wiser of him if he had not gone. I do not think that Thomas put his finger into the print of the nails, or thrust his hand into his Master’s side. On the contrary, we read—

28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

Leaping out of the slough of doubt, onto the rock of confidence by a single spring, and getting further, perhaps, than others had done who had before outstripped him, he inferred the deity of Christ from His wounds and His resurrection—a grand chain of argument of which we have not the intervening links. His thoughtful mind made him feel that if Christ was indeed risen—the same Christ who had died—it was proved by those death-wounds that He was both Lord and God—while his personal, appropriating faith, realizing the identity of the Savior, made him say, “My Lord and my God.”

29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:*

That is well.

29. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That is better.

30-31. *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.*

Now, dear friends, has the purpose, for which this Book was written, been answered in your case? Have you been led to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” and so to believe that you “have life through his name”? If not, why not? May you have grace to answer that question, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—48, 785

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