

The Resurrection and Post-Resurrection Narratives

Chapter 9: The Convincing of Thomas

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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 reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." And Thomas answered and said unto him, "My LORD and my God." Jesus saith unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (Jn. 20:24-29).

The story of unbelieving Thomas and our Lord's second appearance to the apostles to convince him is peculiar to John's gospel. This section of Scripture is not only a great blessing to believers by its teaching, but also serves as a strong proof of the honesty of the gospel writers and evidence for divine inspiration. If the apostles were dishonest hypocrites, they most certainly would not have so faithfully recorded all their own serious defects, doubts and sins.

Thomas, who is identified as "one of the twelve called Didymus" (Jn. 20:24), is mentioned very infrequently in the gospels. The synoptic gospels give us no information about him except his name. (Thomas [Hebrew] and Didymus [Greek] both mean "a twin.") In John's gospel, he is only mentioned twice and this information shows us that Thomas was brave, dedicated and somewhat pessimistic. The first incident occurred when Christ told the disciples of His intention of going to Jerusalem. At this time the disciples were well aware of the Jewish authorities' desire to kill Jesus. Therefore, going to Jerusalem seemed exceedingly dangerous and perhaps even suicidal. It is in this context that the normally quiet Thomas said "unto his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him'" (Jn. 11:16). "Ahead Thomas could see nothing but disaster, but nevertheless he was for going on. Thomas was grimly determined to be faithful unto death."¹ The other incident shows Thomas to be dull of thought and bewildered by our Lord's teaching. After Jesus spoke of going away to prepare a place for the disciples and even said, "And where I go you know and the way you know" (Jn 14:4) Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" (Jn. 14:5). Based on these two examples, many commentators think that Thomas had a gloomy, pessimistic disposition. Such an assessment, however, may be a bit speculative given the sparse information we have regarding Thomas, called Didymus.

As we consider this section of Scripture, there are three main points that merit our attention: (1) Thomas' request or challenge; (2) our Lord's convincing of Thomas; and, (3) the Savior's promised blessing.

¹ William Barclay, *The Master's Men: Character Sketches of the Disciples* (New York: Walker, [1959] 1985), 66.

Thomas' Challenge

The story of the second appearance of Christ, where our Lord proves the resurrection to Thomas, is a direct result of Thomas' absence from the first Lord's day appearance and Thomas' strong expression of unbelief. The absence of Thomas from the first Lord's day assembly is not explained. Therefore, we should not assume that Thomas was somehow blameworthy for missing the fellowship of the disciples. He may have had a legitimate excuse. We simply do not know. We do know, however, that by missing this assembly of saints, Thomas missed a great blessing and spent a whole week suffering needlessly over the Savior's death. "By being absent he was kept in suspense and unbelief a whole week, while all around him were rejoicing in the thought of a risen Lord."² From this incident we learn the importance of "not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, as is the manner of some" (Heb. 10:25). If we miss public worship on the Christian Sabbath, we need to be sure that we have a legitimate reason. We must "never let our place be empty when the means of grace are going on, this is one way to be a growing and prosperous Christian. The very sermon we needlessly miss, may contain a precious word in season for our souls."³

After Thomas returned to the disciples, they attempted to convince him of the resurrection. "The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord'" (Jn. 20:25). The verb translated "said" (*elegon*) is an imperfect and is best translated "were saying." This verb indicates that they kept speaking to Thomas in an attempt to convince him. The disciples were full of peace and joy and were already beginning to act as faithful witnesses. They took pity on Thomas who missed this glorious event and wanted him to have the peace and faith that they had. We must keep in mind that others were in the room besides the apostles. It is likely that Thomas received a barrage of excited, joyful testimonies of the risen Savior.

John sums up all the various accounts of these witnesses with the statement, "We have seen the Lord" (Jn. 20:25). They no doubt related to Thomas all that had recently happened. They told him how they had examined Jesus from only a few feet away; how Christ had the scars on His hands, feet and side. They relayed how they had been able to touch the Savior and see that He had a real physical—flesh and bones—human body. The disciples were attempting to heal the pain in Thomas' heart that they had experienced. They wanted to encourage Thomas and build up his faith by communicating what they had seen. They used the very same language (in the plural) "that Mary Magdalene had used (20:18) when no one believed her."⁴

Thomas, however, would have none of it. He rejected their testimony and responded with a challenge, saying that he would only believe if certain conditions were met. "So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'" (Jn. 20:25). There are a number of things to note regarding this challenge.

First, Thomas' challenge was very strong. He uses the emphatic double negative *ou me* which means he *certainly* will not believe without these conditions. Thomas was being exceedingly stubborn and uncooperative. He was obstinate. He was so convinced in his own mind that our Lord was still dead that nothing would satisfy him except a personal, physical, sensual experience. "The very form of this speech betokens the strength of his unbelief. For, as Bengel says, it is not, 'If I see, I will believe,' but 'Unless I see, I will not believe,' nor does he

² J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 3:454.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:315.

think he *will* see, though the rest had told him that they had.”⁵ Because of the apostles’ hardness of heart and unbelief (Mk. 16:14), Jesus had permitted them both to see and handle His physical body. Thomas now demands the same proof almost as if he believes the other disciples are playing a very inappropriate joke upon him.

Second, Thomas’ demand was unreasonable. Thomas had heard the testimony of the women and Mary Magdalene. He also had heard the report from John and Peter regarding the empty tomb and the grave clothes. Now Thomas does not even accept the testimony of the ten apostles together, the two disciples from Emmaus and others who were present. “For him all this unanimous testimony of all these people, whose character for veracity he knew so well amounts to nothing. The fact that all of them, like himself had never dreamed of Jesus’ resurrection, had thought it impossible, and had then been convinced from this unbelief by overwhelming evidence, affects Thomas in an opposite way: he determines to set himself against all.”⁶ “And his sin of unbelief is the more aggravated, inasmuch as this disciple was present at the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Christ, and had heard Christ himself say, that he should rise from the dead the third day.”⁷

The absurdity of Thomas’ position is further demonstrated by the fact that Christ had chosen the apostles to be His special witnesses of His life, death and resurrection to the nations; yet Thomas, one of their own, was rejecting their eyewitness testimony. If Thomas could not believe the words of the apostles, how were the apostles supposed to convince others of the truth of the gospel who would never have the opportunity of empirical proof?

The unreasonable position of Thomas served at least three purposes in this narrative. First, God was showing all the apostles how irrational, absurd and sinful their unbelief had been. All the other disciples (except John) only a few hours earlier were no different than Thomas. Our Lord had to show them His hands, feet and side to convince them of the resurrection. Thomas is only expressing “an exaggerated expression of the attitude they manifested to the women who said that they had seen Jesus.”⁸ Therefore, it is unfair to single out Thomas. Christ providentially arranged this whole scene to remind all the apostles how unready all of them were to believe and to focus their minds on the importance of believing divine testimony without empirical proof. If everyone demanded empirical proof in the same manner as Thomas and the apostles, the gospel would not have spread through the nations.

The infallibility and self-authenticating nature of Scripture is very important for the propagation of the gospel. Christ has chosen to speak to all subsequent generations through the written divine Word alone. “The Bible is, as it were, a letter from Christ to his people, to his church. But Christ is God. He speaks to his Church so that his church might speak to mankind.”⁹ If the apostles do not accept the divine testimony as sufficient and make man the ultimate reference point for truth and meaning, then the demands of sinful, autonomous man will always set up absurd tests that the gospel can never meet. This is the result of man’s depravity and his desire to be his own god. While Thomas and the apostles were certainly unwilling to go that far in their demand for verification; nevertheless, *in principle*, it was the position of unbelief that they had unconsciously adopted.

⁵ David Brown, *The Four Gospels: A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical*, 481.

⁶ R C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1380-1381.

⁷ John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, 2:128.

⁸ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 384-385.

⁹ Cornelius Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963), 134.

Thus, what Thomas and the apostles had done was dishonoring to God's holy Word and the testimony of Christ the living Word. Peter assures us that God's written Word is "more sure" and more convincing than even being an eyewitness to miracles (e.g., Lk. 16:31; 2 Pet. 1:19; Jn. 20:29, 31). If a person is not satisfied by what the Word of God says, then according to Jesus no amount of empirical evidence will persuade them of the truth ("If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" [Lk. 16:31]). "The word of Christ carried such evidential warranting power within itself that He could say that whoever rejected His word would be judged on the final day by that very word itself (John 12:48)... The gospel as God's own effective disclosure presents clear and convincing evidence in itself that it is the word of God."¹⁰ Therefore, we should be perfectly satisfied with the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ which is contained in His Word. Let us always remember that the unbeliever is always unreasonable because he demands proof upon proof when he has already rejected many satisfactory evidences.

Second, God was using the unbelief of Thomas to bring out another great proof of the resurrection for all succeeding generations. Divine providence overruled the dullness and foolishness of Thomas and the other disciples to multiply proofs for the gospel. The resurrection narratives place proofs one right after another so that no one can have a reasonable excuse to reject the great truths of the gospel.

Third, Thomas' demand was presumptuous and disrespectful toward God. It was not proper for Thomas who had repeatedly heard the teaching of Jesus and had seen His amazing signs to make demands upon God. God requires His people to believe in His Word whether they are attended by signs or not. The fact that our Lord was kind and merciful to Thomas and satisfied his bold and astonishing demands does not mean that we should emulate Thomas' arrogant, unbelieving behavior. We must remember that because Thomas was one of the twelve, Christ had to show Himself to him so that he could fulfill his role as an apostle, a special eyewitness of redemption.

When most people demand proof of the gospel in our day they are not truly seeking after God and His righteousness, but rather are making artificial excuses for their rejection of the truth. Such behavior is exceedingly dangerous. The Most High is not required to do your bidding. The Sovereign Lord does not perform on cue. It is stupid, arrogant and foolish to ask God to give you some special sign or proof when He has already done so in His infallible Word. If you want proof of the gospel; study God's Word, and humbly ask the Lord to open your blind eyes to it. People who mock God and treat Him as some sort of circus animal are simply suppressing the truth so that they can continue a life of sin and debauchery.

Jesus Convinces Thomas

After Thomas' challenge John picks up the story one week later when the apostles were meeting together in the same room. "And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!'" (Jn. 20:26). The phrase "after eight days" according to the Jewish method of reckoning time (i.e. they count the first and the last days in the period.) places this scene on the following

¹⁰ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998), 201.

Sunday.¹¹ John's narrative gives the impression that this Lord's day meeting is virtually identical with the previous Sunday except that now Thomas is present and can be corrected by the Savior. John even mentions that the doors were locked just as before. From this second Lord's day meeting and appearance we can deduce that from the resurrection day onward the early believers recognized the first day of the week as the New Covenant Sabbath day. It is likely that the change of the day was communicated to the apostles by our Lord, but the instructions were not inscripturated.¹²

The presence of Thomas at this assembly of the saints indicates that his disbelief in the resurrection did not cause him to abandon Christ or the Christian saints. His unbelief was bad, but it was not the kind of unbelief that belongs to apostates. Thomas still had faith in Christ and was part of the church. There is a great difference between those who deliberately nurture their unbelief and the temporary unbelief of Thomas. There is also a major difference between someone like Thomas who is sad and downcast about his unbelief and wants relief and the reprobate who loves unbelief and has no true regard of Jesus Christ and the cross. Such people cling to unbelief because it is the delusion that comforts their guilty heart as it swims in iniquity and lives in darkness. We must never confuse these two classes of men. "Let us be charitable with the honest doubter; God will take care of him, as He took care of Thomas. But we can have no sympathy with the dishonest doubter, who often makes his doubts the plea for carelessness and Godlessness."¹³

Note also that, even though Thomas did not yet believe in the resurrection, the apostles and the saints allowed Him to stay within their company and fellowship. They showed love and forbearance with Thomas because: a) They had been guilty of the same sin and only repented because of Jesus' personal appearance; b) They no doubt remembered our Lord's statement in John 17 that none would be lost to apostasy except Judas; and, therefore, c) They knew that it was only a matter of time before Thomas repented of his unbelief in the resurrection. These unique redemptive historical circumstances are important because the New Testament epistles make it perfectly clear that a person who does not sincerely believe that Christ rose from the dead is not a Christian (see Rom. 10:9).

These details teach us that if a person is having doubts about a doctrine or struggling with sin, then he should not flee the visible church, but hold fast in it and seek help. A backslider will

¹¹ "Dr. Hammond has proved from Josephus [Antiqu. 1.7.C.9], that the Jews used to express a week by eight days" (John Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament*, 2:128).

¹² The idea that Jesus must have personally instructed the apostles regarding the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week is deduced by the following observations: (1) The change of the day after the resurrection is immediate and universal. It is hard to believe that this change could be so quick, based on the apostles' theological analysis of the Sabbath from the Old Testament scriptures alone. (2) In the apostolic church there was never any disagreement or controversy regarding the change of the Sabbath day. This historical fact militates against the idea that the change was based on apostolic inferences alone. (3) The whole concept of divine warrant based on approved historical examples in Scriptures presupposes some sort of divine revelation behind the historical examples. This assertion is proven by two considerations: a) Throughout the Bible, God's people are explicitly forbidden to add to what God had taught or commanded (Dt. 4:2; 12:32; Lev. 10:12; Jer. 7:24, 31; 1 Ki. 12:32-33; Num. 15:39-40; 1 Chr. 15:13-15; Mt. 15:3, 9; Col. 2:20-23; etc). Therefore, the change of the day was not something that the apostles made up or decided was a good idea. b) Paul says that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6) and that "whatever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). This truth means that church ordinances must be founded upon divine revelation not human opinion. If faith is directed to what man has determined in his heart apart from the Word of God, then God is dishonored and man is given the honor due to God alone. Paul calls such things "will worship" (Col. 2:23 KJV).

¹³ D. Macleod, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 168, as quoted in W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Sermon Outline Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 8:304.

stay and repent; while an apostate will leave and join himself to other apostates and the world. As Hutcheson observes, “Whatever be the failings or unbelief of saints, yet it is commendable in them to be amending their other known faults and neglects; and there is still hope of their case, so long as they use the means whereby they may be cured of their unbelief, and do not, with their unbelief, quit the use of the means also....”¹⁴

Further, it is noteworthy that our Lord waited one full week before relieving Thomas’ pain and unbelief. Although Scripture gives no specific reason why a whole week transpired before this appearance, it probably lies in the Savior’s sovereign desire to teach Thomas and the other apostles an important lesson. Christ wanted Thomas to fully experience the bitterness and pain caused by unbelief. Also, the other apostles had to experience the frustration of Thomas’ obstinacy. The passing of the full week would not only magnify the Redeemer’s mercy and compassion, but also teach the disciples to wait upon Christ and seek relief in Him alone.

After Jesus appears and greets the disciples, He immediately turns His attention to Thomas.¹⁵ “Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing’” (Jn. 20:27). There are a number of things to note regarding this statement.

First, note that Jesus very precisely and fully meets every single demand that Thomas had made. In fact, for “each demand of Thomas there is a command of Christ, though the order in which the commands are uttered is not exactly the same as that which the demands were made.”¹⁶ The very specific manner in which the Savior addressed Thomas would have startled Thomas, for it proved that even though the Redeemer had not been present when Thomas made his demands, the Lord knew exactly what Thomas had said. This not only demonstrated that Jesus had been alive the previous Lord’s day, but also exhibited Christ’s omniscience and divinity.¹⁷ The Mediator had personally witnessed Thomas’ unbelief. Our Lord’s words must have pierced Thomas’ conscience and brought great sorrow to his soul. The reproduction of almost the very same words was designed to press home to Thomas the unreasonableness of his demands.

Regarding our Lord’s commands to Thomas, commentators are divided as to whether Thomas actually reached out and touched the scars of the crucifixion. The text does not actually say what Thomas did, but only what he said. Given the fact that Jesus *ordered* Thomas to touch the imprints on His hands and side, it is safe to assume that Thomas obeyed the Savior. He really had no other choice. Does this imply in any way that Thomas did not believe until he actually touched the Redeemer’s resurrected body? No. Our Lord’s amazing appearance and statement about the previous Lord’s day events was surely evidence enough. Christ’s specific demands were designed to show Thomas the unreasonable nature of his request; the Savior’s love toward

¹⁴ George Hutcheson, *John*, 424.

¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Jesus in this passage follows His own judicial procedures set forth in Matthew 18:15ff. Hutcheson observes, “Such as have publicly sinned to the offending of others should be publicly dealt with, to take with and amend their fault, that so their recovery may strengthen those whom their failings were ready to weaken; therefore doth Christ deal with and seek to reclaim Thomas, in presence of all the disciples, to whom he had professed his willful unbelief” (*The Gospel of John*, 424-425).

¹⁶ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 2:465.

¹⁷ “The One who died on Calvary’s cross was ‘God manifested in flesh,’ and being God, He not only sees every deed we perform, but also hears every word that we utter. O that we might be more conscious, hour by hour, that the eye of Divine holiness is ever upon us, that the ear of the omnipresent One is ever open to all that we say, that He still stands in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks! To realize *this* is to walk ‘in the fear of God’” (Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 3:297).

him; and were directed to us also, so that nothing would be lacking regarding the proof and nature of His resurrection to all subsequent generations. Lenski notes,

They were made “witnesses” of his resurrection (Acts 2:32; 3:15) in the fullest possible sense of the word, “witnesses” whose testimony was to stand as being unassailable in all future ages. We may blame Thomas personally as much as we will. Jesus knew that Thomas would have many successors in all ages. Hence, if Thomas, “one of the Twelve,” had been left with any justification, however flimsy, even for any degree of doubt as regards the resurrection of Jesus, the effect would have been bad for all time to come. By thus dealing as he does with Thomas, meeting him on Thomas’ own ground, he is dealing with all doubt and disbelief in his resurrection in all time to come, closing the mouth of every disbeliever in all future time.¹⁸

Therefore, we must be eternally grateful to our precious Savior for so firmly and clearly overthrowing all reasons for disbelief for all ages.

Second, we should carefully note the amazing compassion, mercy and kindness that Christ showed to his erring apostle. Thomas had made demands that he should never have made. They were unreasonable, unbelieving and even irreverent. Thomas was in no position to make demands of the risen, all-powerful divine-human Mediator. The arrogant manner in which Thomas exhibited his unbelief was provoking and given the many proofs already set before him, inexcusable. One would naturally expect at a minimum that Thomas would be severely rebuked and chastised for such behavior. But our Savior does no such thing. He came and immediately fixed His loving eyes upon Thomas and ministered to him. Jesus did not speak words of anger or reproach but addressed him directly in order to promote his faith. “[I]t is impossible to imagine anything more patient and compassionate than our Lord’s treatment of this weak disciple. He does not reject him, or dismiss him, or excommunicate him.... He deals with him according to his weakness, like a gentle nurse dealing with a froward child.... If nothing but the grossest, coarsest, more material evidence could satisfy him, even that evidence was supplied. Surely this was a love that passeth knowledge, and a patience that passeth understanding.”¹⁹

What Jesus did teaches us most vividly that the achieving and application of salvation are great acts of condescension by our Savior. Christ does not give us what we deserve, but rather gives us what we need, to see, believe and repent. Although Thomas had no right to ask to place his finger in the print of the nails and his hand into the Redeemer’s side, the Lord commanded him to do so to cure his unbelief. “Our Lord does not always act toward us according to his own dignity, but according to our necessity.”²⁰ This demonstrates that salvation is by grace. Grace is unmerited favor from God. Because of His great love and compassion toward us, Jesus gives us the exact opposite of what we really deserve. “He will not *break the bruised reed*, but as a good shepherd, *gathers that which was driven away*, Ezek. xxxiv.16.”²¹

This incident teaches us that redemption is particular and, from beginning to end, is applied by Christ. Jesus does not give up on His sheep. He does not abandon them when they fall. But rather He seeks out His own and directly deals with their weakness and unbelief. Although the Savior no longer makes personal appearances to His people, He still ministers to them by His Spirit. This ought to greatly strengthen our faith in the Savior’s love toward us and His high priestly work. Jesus is “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2); who “is able to

¹⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1386.

¹⁹ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 3:456.

²⁰ Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Evidence of our Lord’s Wounds,” 34:713.

²¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:1222.

keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy..." (Jude 24). Let us take comfort in the fact that the great Shepherd leads even the stupid, slow, dull and doubting believers into safety.

By way of application this passage teaches us to have compassion and patience with believers who are slow to grasp theological principles and feeble in their trust. Sanctification and growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ takes time. It takes patience and compassion to deal with those who are slow and dull. This does not mean that the church is to tolerate heresy or scandalous sin, but that infirmities are to be dealt with gently, firmly and patiently. Churches that expect some type of perfection or demand an almost immediate, exhaustive knowledge of theology before communicant membership, are being unreasonable and are ignoring the progressive nature of sanctification. "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."²²

Third, Christ commands Thomas to stop disbelieving and start believing. "Do not be unbelieving" (Jn. 20:27). This statement has two elements, the one negative and the other positive. Therefore, it contains both a rebuke and an exhortation. The passage literally means, "Stop being an unbeliever, but a believer." Thomas, from now on, is to stop his unbelief and replace it with a belief in all the historical facts relating to Jesus' accomplishment of redemption. "By placing the negative and positive together, 'do not show thyself unbelieving but believing,' the admonition is made emphatic."²³ This passage teaches us a number of important things.

(1) It proves that the saving faith involves a trust or belief in *all* of the Savior's redemptive acts. When Jesus spoke these words to Thomas he was not completely faithless. But, he as yet had not embraced the fact that Christ had literally, bodily and physically risen from the dead. Our Lord demands a full embracing of *the whole gospel*. People who believe they are Christians who accept certain aspects of the gospel while disbelieving and rejecting others are living in gross self-deception. If Thomas had not repented and embraced the living Redeemer, he would have been removed from the visible church.

(2) This passage demonstrates that not believing in the gospel is a sin that must be forsaken and replaced with faith in Christ. The Savior's imperative ("Be not faithless [*me ginou apistos*]. Present middle imperative of *ginomai* in prohibition..."²⁴) applies not only to Thomas, but to all mankind. The Mediator and the whole Word of God emphatically rejects the modern pluralistic notion that all religions basically teach the same thing and that all the diverse spiritual paths lead directly to God. The resurrected Redeemer who has all authority in heaven and on earth commands each and every one of us to put off all unbelief and replace it with faith in the person and work of Christ. "This warning is given to us all: *Be not faithless*; for if we are faithless, we are Christless and graceless, hopeless and joyless; let us therefore say, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief*."²⁵

People need to understand that unbelief toward Christ and the true and living God is very evil in and of itself. It is the real root behind all other sins. It makes people unfit for their proper duties and renders the Word of God unprofitable. It leads man away from Jesus into all sorts of idols, sins and abominations. It is especially wicked when committed by people who have been brought up in the church and repeatedly exposed to the truth about Christ. We must recognize

²² J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 3:456.

²³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 1387.

²⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:316.

²⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:1222.

and treat unbelief as the true wretched evil that it is. It destroys souls, households, communities and even whole nations. Let us continually pray that God would strengthen and increase our faith and love toward Jesus Christ and His holy Word, for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). “The exercise of the grace of faith is well-pleasing to Christ; it gives glory to him, and makes for the soul’s comfort; and a word from Christ, his power going along with it, will enable men to believe, as it did Thomas.”²⁶

Fourth, Jesus’ command to Thomas was efficacious. “And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (Jn. 20:28). The amazing answer of Thomas which is short, excited and full of devotion is exactly what we would expect from a person completely taken by surprise, immediately convicted of his sin and overwhelmed with faith and love for Christ. “It is the language of amazement, delight, repentance, faith and adoration, all combined in one sentence.”²⁷ There are a number of noteworthy things about this answer.

(1) It is one of the clearest statements of the divinity of the Messiah set forth in the whole New Testament. Thomas confesses publicly that Jesus is “My God.” Socinians, Unitarians and various cults have attempted to deny the obvious meaning of Thomas’ words by asserting that Thomas was shocked, surprised and excited by what he saw, that he was merely shouting out “my God” as a man would when cursing or taking the Lord’s name in vain.

Such a view is completely absurd for the following reasons. This confession must be interpreted in the immediate context which is one where the Savior had just demonstrated His omniscience (Jn. 20:27). Also, Thomas was with the Redeemer throughout His ministry when He repeatedly taught His own divinity (e.g., see Jn. 5:17-26; 8:57-59; 10:28-39; Mk. 2:5-11; cf. Rev. 21:6-7). “To talk of an ‘exaggerated cry,’ is altogether out of the question, in relation to a Gospel which everywhere discloses a tendency to place the divinity of Christ in the clearest light.”²⁸ Further, the idea that Thomas, a pious Jew, would curse in front of Christ and all the disciples is untenable and ludicrous. Moreover, if Thomas did publicly, boldly and loudly take the name of the Lord God in vain in front of Jesus, one would expect an immediate rebuke from the Mediator. There was no rebuke, but rather a statement about believing. Our Lord was one who never ignored public scandalous sin. Besides, the heretics and cult mongers who make such foolish arguments fail to take into consideration that the expression “my God” as a violation of the third commandment, because of surprise, shock or anger, is a distinctly English expression and was not used by the ancient Jews in such a manner. In addition, the words that Thomas used to address Jesus are identical to words used to address Jehovah in the Old Testament. For example Psalm 35:23 reads, “‘Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and Lord, *o Theos mou kai o kurios mou.*”²⁹ Those who reject the divinity of Christ cannot circumvent this passage. “It is an incontrovertible proof that Thomas looked on Christ as God, and addressed Him to His face as God, and that our Lord made no objection, and did not reprove him.”³⁰

This amazing confession teaches us that if we are to have true saving faith in Jesus we must own Him as not just Savior, but also as Lord and God. We must believe in the deity of Christ; that He is truly God of very God in His being and attributes in every possible way. He is not like God or God-like as the cults say. He is not a mere man that the church turned into God

²⁶ John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, 2:129.

²⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 3:466.

²⁸ E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 2:462-463.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 2:462.

³⁰ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 3:466.

as the modernists so often teach. But He is really God, who came to earth and assumed a true human nature to live a sinless life and suffer and die for His people. “In faith there must be the consent of the will to gospel terms, as well as the assent of the understanding to gospel truths. We must accept of Christ to be that to us which the Father hath appointed him. *My Lord* refers to *Adonai*—my foundation and stay; *my God* to *Elohim*—my prince and judge. God having constituted him the umpire and referee, we must approve the choice, and entirely refer ourselves to him. This is the vital act of faith, He is mine (Cant.ii.16).”³¹

(2) Thomas’ use of the personal pronoun indicates that this confession was a very personal act of faith and repentance. Thomas was not simply stating an accurate abstract theological principle, but was also submitting himself to the resurrected King. “He who a little while ago was trying ‘to lord it over the Lord’ (laying down conditions for him to meet), has become submissive. No longer does Thomas wish to rule supreme. In Jesus he recognizes his sovereign, yes even his God! For a Jew that was a remarkable confession.”³² “He confesses to the risen Jesus that he belongs to him as his willing subject; he adores him and henceforth will serve him as he deserves.”³³ John has included this amazing confession so that the reader or listener to this account will, like Thomas, see Christ for whom He truly is and believe in Him and trust in Him as Lord and God. When we truly behold Jesus as He is presented in the Scriptures, we lay down the weapons of our warfare and bow the knee to Him. Thomas’ confession must be in our hearts and upon our lips.

(3) Thomas’ confession is the greatest confession recorded in the gospels. It serves as a confessional climax in John’s gospel. Thomas “rises by a single bound from the lowest degree of faith to the highest, and proclaims the divinity of Master in a more categorical expression than all those which had ever come forth from the lips of any of his fellow apostles. The last becomes in a moment the first, and the faith of the apostles attains at length, in the person of Thomas, to the whole height of the divine reality formulated in the first words of the Prologue.”³⁴

If you do not believe in Jesus, then you should ask God to open your blind eyes. Also, you must study carefully all the Scriptures relating to the suffering servant. (Especially study the four gospels; also, examine Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.) Familiarize yourself with the life death and resurrection of Christ. Learn and study every detail of the Savior’s ministry and sacrificial death. As you do, continually pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Further, go to a solid Bible-believing Reformed church and listen to the preaching of the gospel for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Do not stop seeking the Lord Jesus Christ until Thomas’ confession becomes your own.

Jesus’ Last Beatitude

After Thomas’ wonderful confession our Lord comments upon his faith and the faith of those who believe without first having immediate empirical proof. “Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” (Jn. 20:29). This statement contains the last great blessing pronounced by Jesus in all the gospel accounts. It is appropriate that this blessing is connected with believing in the full

³¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:1222.

³² William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 2:465.

³³ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386.

³⁴ Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on John’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1886] 1978), 984.

gospel and comes only one week after all the central historical acts of redemption are completed. There are a number of things to note in the Savior's statement.

First, Christ acknowledges Thomas' faith in the resurrection" "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed" (Jn. 20:29). "The perfect *pepisteukas*, *thou hast believed*, signifies: 'Thou art henceforth in *possession* of faith.'"³⁵ The Mediator's statement has the sense of: "Thomas now you have at last believed in My resurrection because you have observed Me directly with your own eyes." This statement indicates that Thomas immediately believed even before he touched the Savior with his own hands. This sentence is not a rebuke, but a statement of fact. When taken with the following statement there is the obvious *implied* admonition that it would have been better or nobler if Thomas had believed a week before on the basis of the testimony of the ten apostles. Thomas' faith had been greatly weakened by the crucifixion and death of Jesus and he had been exceedingly dull and slow to believe the resurrection. Yet, the moment he does embrace the gospel in all its fullness, our Lord owns him as a believer. Even though the Redeemer implies that believing without seeing is nobler; nevertheless, the Mediator graciously acknowledges Thomas' faith. "Those who have long stood it out, if at last they yield, shall find him ready to forgive. No sooner did Thomas consent to Christ than Christ gives him the comfort of it, and lets him know that he believes."³⁶

It is important that we understand that there is nothing wrong or defective regarding Thomas' faith in the resurrection. Thomas had true, saving faith and will receive all the blessings of salvation that Jesus achieved through His death and resurrection. The implied admonition only regards how a person comes to faith in Christ. In the period when redemptive history is coming to pass and new revelation is coming forth, God used the *direct observation* of signs, wonders, miracles and redemptive events to bring forth faith in His people. There were the amazing miracles during Jesus' ministry and those attending His death and resurrection, as well as the forty days of post-resurrection appearances. Signs and wonders would even continue during the ministry of the apostles when the first churches were planted and the New Testament canon was being completed. Therefore, sight does have a *necessary* place in redemptive history. In fact, we have noted before that it was absolutely necessary for the apostles to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Savior (Ac. 1:21-22). The apostles were special eyewitnesses and infallible interpreters of Jesus' person and work (Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15; Heb. 2:3-4). But a new era is coming where faith cannot be founded on sight as Thomas and the other apostles had experienced.

Second, Jesus pronounces a blessing upon everyone who believes without seeing whether from the past, present or future. Although the beatitude is timeless, it is obviously directed to all of the readers of John's gospel who would not have the opportunity to witness any of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ or even any of the miracles that were a part of the apostolic era. "[T]he effect of this beatitude is to apply the lesson of Thomas to all readers of the Gospel: Happy are they who, without having had Thomas' experience share Thomas' faith!"³⁷

This beatitude must not be misunderstood. It does *not* mean that believers have blind faith or a trust in Jesus Christ without any evidences whatsoever. But, rather, it is teaching that Christians are blessed, who have faith in the gospel without being *eyewitnesses* themselves or without *immediate empirical proof*. The evidences for the truth of the gospel are very strong and abundant. But they are all to be found in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

³⁵ Ibid, 985.

³⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:1222.

³⁷ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386.

Those who claim there are no evidences must ignore the perfection of the divine law, the dozens of perfectly fulfilled prophecies, the absolute, logical consistency of Scripture and the many proofs of the resurrection found in the gospels of which this incident with Thomas forms a climax. Therefore, God does not expect anyone to believe on insufficient evidence. But, it is the kind of evidence that Jesus here has in mind. God has ordained that faith is to come not from direct sight, but rather from the self-authenticating Word of God. Calvin writes, “Faith cannot flow from a merely experimental knowledge of events, but must draw its origin in the word of God. Christ, therefore, blames Thomas for rendering less honour to the word of God than he ought to have done, and for having regarded faith—which springs from hearing, and ought to be wholly fixed on the word—as bound to the other senses.”³⁸

This point is established by the Bible’s own definition of faith. The author of Hebrews writes, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (11:1). Faith is the trustful confidence in the promises of God. For the men of old such as Abel, Noah and Abraham these promises came by direct revelation. For us, obviously, they are restricted to God’s inscripturated Word alone. “The faith of which our author is speaking is not blind faith, vacuous and unintelligent credulity, but faith that is in the highest sense enlightened and substantial, because the divine word to which it is the response is a word not only of power but also of light (Ps. 119:105). In the biblical purview faith and revelation belong together, and revelation inevitably involves, on the part of the recipient, the activity of the intellective faculty: by faith *we understand*.”³⁹

Similarly, in Romans Paul says that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). A person cannot have faith and be saved if they do not hear the gospel preached. The gospel that is preached is derived solely from the Scriptures. All men are required to receive the gospel message and believe it as true because it is the Word of God. Without a direct, infallible, inscripturated word from Jehovah there could be no certain ground of faith. If the Bible was not “God breathed” or “inspired” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and inerrant it could not be a sure foundation of our trust. Even Thomas, who believed only after he saw, did not believe in isolation from the Old Testament prophecies and the inspired promises of the resurrection by Christ. Thomas’ empirical observation brought to remembrance and confirmed the teachings of the gospel that before he had overlooked, misinterpreted and not perceived. Thomas did not have faith *apart* from the divine Word; but, he did have help from the immediate experience of his senses. When Thomas saw the resurrected Savior the Holy Spirit opened his eyes; gave him the proper understanding; connected his sensual experience to the Scriptures and teachings of the Lord and thus brought out of his enlightened heart his great confession: “My Lord and my God.” Thus, every believer ultimately walks by faith and not sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

By way of application Jesus is saying that everyone should be satisfied by a faith that is founded upon the Word of God alone. Now that the apostles and New Covenant prophets are all gone and the canon of Scripture is closed, we could even say that a person who *demand*s an immediate sensual experience or empirical proof before they will believe in Jesus is demonstrating unbelief and obstinacy against the gospel. Because Scripture is self-authenticating and absolutely authoritative, preachers can call men to repent and believe without performing signs, experiments or producing many sources outside of Scripture that prove the truth of the gospel.

³⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 442.

³⁹ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 442.

Further, even if several independent proofs of the gospels were presented to unbelievers and scoffers, they would not be accepted because the unbeliever always sifts the facts through his unbelieving, heathen presuppositions. The so-called “brute facts” that do not fit in with his sinful, human, autonomous thought are *a priori* (i.e. before the facts) ruled out of bounds. That is why Abraham told the rich man suffering in torment, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead” (Lk. 16:31). The Pharisees saw the resurrection of Lazarus and remained in unbelief. The Sanhedrinists heard the eyewitness testimony of the Roman guards who witnessed the resurrection, yet remained the enemies of Christ. The unregenerate heart that rejects the perfect, inerrant, inspired and miraculous Bible will not be overcome or changed by any degree of external and immediate evidences. Signs, miracles and even resurrections will not and cannot convince men who are dead in sins (Eph. 2:1), spiritually blind (Jn. 3:13; 1 Cor. 2:14), totally depraved (Mk. 7:20-23; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9) and unable to do anything that pleases God (Rom. 8:6-8). The problem with unbelievers is not the amount of direct empirical evidences related to the gospel, but rather their darkened hearts: “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (Jn. 3:19-20; cf. Rom. 1:21, 28).

The unbeliever professes to be amused by the absurdities of the gospel; to cringe at what he considers the unjustness of God’s law; to laugh at the doctrine of creation; to be shocked at the cruelty of the cross; to be incredulous at the unreasonableness of biblical inerrancy. We must look beyond the unbeliever’s objections to the gospel to the true ground of his hostility and enmity. It is because he is unwilling to bend the knee to Jesus Christ and acknowledge his sin and guilt before God, that he continually demands proofs that are unable to be supplied. It is because he relishes his sin and lusts and is unwilling to forsake them and follow Christ that he demands the impossible. The Scriptures are a sufficient witness for faith and the Scriptures are only able to convince and convict when accompanied by the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.... No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (Jn. 6:44, 65).

Saving faith does not depend on the enticing words of man’s wisdom. It does not rest on clever philosophical proofs, or on the latest archeological and historical evidences, but on the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. Although the Bible describes faith as an activity of man, it also teaches that faith is a direct result of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the knowledge of the Word of God to convict a person of his sins, to convince a person of the truth of Scripture—in particular the gospel, and to place his trust in Christ as He is presented in the Scripture. The Holy Spirit produces saving faith and guarantees that a believer’s faith will never fail. Since faith is a gift of God, God receives all the glory in the salvation of men. God “even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ.... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:5, 8).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ “Ephesians 2:8-9: To the Ephesians Paul writes, ‘By grace you have been saved through faith—and this [*touto*] not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast.’ Even though ‘faith’ is a feminine noun in the Greek and ‘this’ is a neuter demonstrative pronoun, it is still entirely possible that Paul intended to teach that ‘faith,’ the nearest possible antecedent, is the antecedent of the pronoun ‘this,’ and accordingly that saving faith is the gift of God. It is permissible in Greek syntax for the neuter pronoun to refer antecedently to a feminine noun, particularly when it serves to render more prominent the matter previously referred to (see for example, ‘your salvation [*soterias*], and this [*touto*] from God’—Phil. 1:28; see also 1 Cor. 6:6, 8). The only other possible antecedents to the *touto* are (1) the earlier feminine dative noun ‘grace’ (*chariti*) which hardly needs to be defined as a ‘gift of God.’ (2) the nominal idea of ‘salvation’ (*soteria*) implied in the verbal idea ‘you have been ‘saved,’

When John described the difference between people who were saved and remained in the church and those who departed because they did not have true saving faith he wrote, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things...the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1 Jn. 2:20, 21). “The Spirit demonstrates the truth to the mind, *i.e.* produces the conviction that it is the truth, and leads the soul to embrace it with assurance and delight.”⁴¹

Third, the blessing that results from believing in Christ is the blessing of salvation in the fullest sense of that term. There were many people in the days of our Lord who beheld the Savior and even saw the miracles; but, who were not blessed by it in any way. The reason they did not receive blessing is because they did not behold Jesus with the eyes of faith. But throughout history many people have heard the gospel and have looked to the Redeemer with spiritual sight; with the eyes of faith. These people have never physically seen the Mediator; but yet, they see Him in a much more satisfying, lasting and real manner than the unbelievers who physically beheld Him two thousand years ago. “In this sense Paul says to the Galatians, (iii.1,) that *Christ was crucified before their eyes*; and, therefore, if we desire to see in Christ what may render us *happy and blessed*, let us learn to *believe*, when we *do not see*.”⁴² Peter says that such faith is more precious than gold which perishes and commends believers: “Jesus Christ, whom not having seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:7-8). Do you have the faith that the Savior says is blessed? If you do, there are a number of soteriological blessings that flow from it.

(1) It is through faith in Christ that we receive life everlasting. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). Those who have an abiding trust or confidence in Jesus will not receive the everlasting condemnation that their sin and guilt deserves but rather will have a never-ending life in the realm of bliss and glory with God.⁴³ The man who has faith in the Savior is in possession of eternal life right now. “Saving faith is not some difficult and meritorious work

which Paul has already implied is a gift by his use of charity, and like ‘grace’ (*chariti*) and ‘faith’ (*pisteos*) is also feminine in Greek, or (3) the entire preceding notion of ‘salvation by grace through faith,’ which, of course, amounts to saying that faith, along with grace and salvation, is the gift of God. However the text is exegeted, when all of its features are taken into account, the conclusion is unavoidable that faith in Jesus Christ is a gift of God” (Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998], 732). Other passages that teach or imply that faith is a gift from God are as follows: Phil. 1:6, 29; Ac. 11:18; 13:46-48; 16:14; Jn. 3:6-8; 1:13; Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:25; etc

⁴¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 3:71.

⁴² John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 2:279.

⁴³ “The expression, ‘believeth in Him,’ is deeply important. It describes that one act of man’s soul which is needful to give him an interest in Jesus Christ. It is not a mere belief of the head [i.e. not a mere intellectual assent or a historical knowledge] that there is such a Person as Jesus Christ, and that He is a Savior. It is a belief of the heart and will. When a person, feeling his desperate need by reason of sin, flees to Jesus Christ, and trusts in Him, leans on Him, and commits his soul entirely to Him as his Saviour and Redeemer, he is said, in the language of the text, to ‘believe on Him’” (J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 1:157). Illustrations have often been used to explain the instrumental and appropriating nature of faith; faith can be compared to an empty vessel which holds a great treasure or an empty ring which holds a priceless diamond. Faith is described as the hand of the soul. Faith is spoken of as an eye which looks away from itself toward Jesus Christ. Saving faith is always directed toward the Savior. Genuine faith always acknowledges that we have nothing to contribute to our salvation; that all our righteousness is as filthy rags; that apart from the Mediator we are hopeless, destitute, dead and damned.

by which man must perform so as to give him a claim upon God for the blessing of salvation. It is not on account of our faith that God saves us, but it is through the means of our faith.”⁴⁴ “The salvation of the Gospel is exceedingly full. It is not merely being pardoned. It is being counted completely righteous, and made a citizen of heaven. It is not merely an escape from hell, but the reception of a title to heaven.”⁴⁵

(2) It is by faith in Jesus that we are adopted into God’s spiritual family and become children of God. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn. 1:12-13). Those who trust in the Savior receive the greatest of spiritual benefits; the right or authority through God’s grace to be the children of God. Believing in the “name” of Christ means to trust in His whole person. The Redeemer, as defined in Scripture, must be the direct object of your trust, reliance and devotion. Do you believe in Christ as He truly is? Do you trust Him as a Person? Do you rely on His sacrificial death to wash away all your sins?

(3) Faith in the Savior delivers us from the judgment of God. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5:24). The man who trusts in the person and work of Christ has passed from a spiritual state of death to a state of spiritual life. The very moment he believes in Jesus, his guilt is completely removed and his state of condemnation is over. That person has absolutely nothing to fear when looking forward to the judgment of the last day. If you look to the Savior with the eyes of faith, you can rest assured that on the day of judgment the Lord will say directly to you: “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:34).

(4) Everyone who believes in the Mediator will have his spiritual needs satisfied and be a foundation of blessings to others. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:37-38). Those who are burdened with sin and are spiritually thirsty need to come to Christ and drink. If you understand your guilt, sense the meaninglessness and vanity of your sinful life and thirst for deliverance, then trust in Jesus and you will find relief. You will not only find abundant spiritual satisfaction in Him, but also He will give you the Holy Spirit so that your life will be a fountain of blessing to others—your family, friends, acquaintances and co-workers. “The drinking of which Jesus spoke is possible only to him who comes in faith. When the believer comes to Christ and drinks he not only slakes his thirst but receives such an abundant supply that veritable rivers flow from him. This stresses the outgoing nature of the Spirit-filled life.”⁴⁶ “It is one thing to come to Christ’s Church, Christ’s ministers, and Christ’s ordinances. It is quite another thing to come to Christ Himself. Happy is he who not only knows these things, but acts upon them!”⁴⁷

(5) Faith in Jesus delivers a person from darkness into a life of light. “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (Jn. 12:46). Apart from the Savior, people remain in the darkness of ignorance, sin and evil. But once Christ is embraced by faith, the guilt of sin is removed and the power of sin in the life is broken. The state of the unregenerate or natural man is spiritual and ethical darkness. But the Redeemer who is the

⁴⁴ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 1:133.

⁴⁵ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John*, 1:157.

⁴⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 425-426.

⁴⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel: John*, 2:428.

very source of light came so that men could be delivered from the clutches of darkness. “The world is in darkness.—Christ is the only light.—Faith is the only way to have [an] interest in Christ.—He that believeth no longer abides in darkness, but has spiritual light.—He that does not believe remains and continues in a state of darkness, the prelude to hell.”⁴⁸ Thus, we see that faith in the Mediator not only brings the blessing of justification but also sanctification.

(6) Everyone who believes in Christ will receive His special high priestly mediation. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (Jn. 17:20). Our Lord not only prays for the eleven apostles, but also for all genuine believers throughout history or what theologians refer to as the invisible church. “[T]he Lord makes it known that believers, and believers only, have an interest in His mediatorial intercessions.... The *description* here given of those who do have an interest in Christ’s intercession is their *faith* in Him. *This* is the fundamental mark of their identification. He mentions not their love, their obedience, their steadfastness (though these *are* necessary in their place), but their *faith*. Wherever our participation of the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection are spoken of, the one thing named is faith. Why? Because this is a grace which compels us to look *outside* ourselves to *Him*! Faith is the great essential, for faith is the mother of obedience and the other graces. But mark it is no vague and undefined faith: ‘which shall believe on me.’ To believe in Christ is to have confidence in and to rely upon Him; it is to trust Him, to rest upon Him.”⁴⁹ What a glorious blessing! Jesus prays for believers that their faith and love will not fail, that they can endure the trials and temptations of life without apostasy. Praise God; for we know that the prayers of our dear Savior are always efficacious (cf. Heb. 7:25; cf. Lk. 22:32).

The blessings that our Lord has promised to all those who believe in Him are wonderful and amazing. Do you believe in Christ even though you have never personally seen Him? If you have, then all these blessings and much more are yours.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 3:143.