

The Christian Life: Sanctification

Must Faith Feel Secure to Be Secure?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

The faith that saves is not faith in our constantly wavering feelings, but in an unchanging Person who saves, keeps, and supplies.

In this series we've been considering some of the ways in which we saints today are often like the Apostle Thomas. We, like Thomas, often try to **place conditions upon God**. We say, "Unless I see, I will not believe," but God commands, "Believe, and you will see." And we, like Thomas, **forget or misunderstand God's promises**. We often fail to live in the light of the victory of the Cross.

Thomas' Confession

Today we take up a third way in which we are often like Thomas, and yet differ from him — and Jesus' own commentary on it:

"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!' 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.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' " (John 20:26-29)

Thomas' words, "My Lord and my God!" are his firm but succinct confession of faith — firm belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and therefore firm belief in the deity and

saving power of the One standing before him. This, as John tells us in the next verses, was the very purpose for which he wrote this inspired Gospel account:

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

(John 20:30-31)

Jesus' Commentary

But note Jesus' commentary on Thomas' confession of faith in Him: "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas was confessing his faith while in the secure environment of the physical presence of his risen Savior. But Jesus, by His comment, was reminding Thomas and the other disciples that the time would soon come when He would not be physically present with His people. Jesus was not saying that Thomas' belief was somehow inferior to that of saints who would follow. What Jesus' words tell us is that faith doesn't need to *feel* secure in order to *be* secure.

Faith Always Has an Object

Why is this so? It is because faith always has an object, and the object of true saving faith is a Person — the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Such a faith is not dependent upon feelings, and therefore it will stand up under the test of the fiery trials of this world. Peter speaks of this fact in his first epistle:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and

that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not 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 Peter 1:3-9)

Paul's Experience

Paul speaks of this experience in his own life when writing to the Corinthian church:

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

"We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.

"And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' [here he quotes Psalm 116:10] we also believe

and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you." (2 Corinthians 4:6-14)

We Live in a World That is Hostile to Faith

This world is not a secure place. It is full of evil that grows worse by the day. Changes occur at a breathtaking pace. It is a world that is doomed and passing away. The only thing that is certain about this present world and world-system is *uncertainty*. There is nothing about it, and nothing in it, that is secure. The true believer cannot, must not, feel at home in this world.

For the true believer this present world is a hostile place, a place where we experience feelings that seem contrary to faith. We, like Paul, can often feel "hard-pressed" — "perplexed" — "persecuted" — "struck down". This was the experience even of an apostle of Christ who had seen the Lord and had been taught personally by Him before he began his ministry (Galatians 1).

Who Is the Origin and Object of Your Faith?

If faith depended on feelings, we would indeed be "crushed". We would have ample reason to be "in despair". We would, indeed, be "forsaken" not only by man but by God. We would be "destroyed" by the evil one. But Christian, that is not your position. Faith doesn't need to *feel* secure in order to *be* secure.

The key question is this: What — or more to the point, *who* — is the origin and the object of your faith?

True saving faith is not a self-manufactured faith, it is the gift of God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2). True saving faith has no anchor in this chaotic, falling-apart world. Its security is ever and only in the risen, unchanging, incorruptible Christ.

He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He has offered His atoning blood upon the mercy seat of the heavenly tabernacle once for all and

forever. He intercedes for you at the Father's right hand at this very moment. He himself is your refuge, now and forever. When fears and doubts assail you on every side, remember Who it is Who is the origin and object of saving faith. As Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, Who has made desolations in the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46)

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