

The Evidence of Our Lord's Wounds

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that faith is strengthened not by demanding signs but by trusting in the wounds of Christ as the ultimate evidence of His love, death, and resurrection.

Scripture: John 20:27, Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Hebrews 10:12, John 19:34, John 11:25, 2 Corinthians 5:21

Topics: "Faith and Doubt", "Christ's Resurrection", "Atonement and Redemption"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon addresses the common struggle of doubt by reflecting on the story of Thomas and the risen Christ. He urges believers to reject the craving for miraculous signs and instead find assurance and comfort in the wounds of Jesus, which testify to His love, death, and resurrection. Spurgeon encourages deep study and meditation on Christ's passion as the surest means to strengthen faith and overcome unbelief.

Transcript

"Then said 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." John 20:27.

Among us at this day we have many persons who are like Thomas' dubious, demanding signs and tokens, suspicious, and oftentimes sad. I am not sure that there is not a slight touch of Thomas in most of us. There are times and seasons when the strong man fails, and when the firm believer has to pause a while, and say, "Is it so?" It may be that our meditation upon the text before us may be of service to those who are touched with the malady which afflicted Thomas.

Notice, before we proceed to our subject in full, that Thomas asked of our Lord what he ought not to have asked. He wanted to put our risen Lord to tests which were scarcely reverent to his sacred person. Admire his Master's patience with him. He does not say, "If he does not choose to believe he may continue to suffer for his unbelief." But no; he fixes his eye upon the doubter, and addresses himself specially to him; yet not in words of reproach or anger. Jesus could bear with Thomas, though Thomas had been a long time with him, and had not known him. To put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, was much more than any disciple had a right to ask of his divine Master; and yet see the condescension of Jesus! Rather than Thomas should suffer from unbelief, Christ will let him take great liberties. Our Lord does not always act towards us according to his own dignity, but according to our necessity; and if we really are so weak that nothing will do but thrusting a hand into his side, he will let us do it. Nor do I wonder at this: if, for our sakes, he suffered a spear to be thrust there, he may well permit a

hand to follow.

Observe that Thomas was at once convinced. He said: "My Lord, and my God." This shows our Master's wisdom, that he indulged him with such familiarity, because he knew that, though the demand was presumptuous, yet the act would work for his good. Our Lord sometimes wisely refuses saying, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended"; but at other times, he wisely grants, because, though it be too much for us to ask, yet he thinks it wise to give.

The subject for our present meditation is just this: the cure of doubts. Thomas was permitted to put his finger into the print of the nails for the curing of his doubts. Perhaps you and I wish that we could do something like it. Oh, if our Lord Jesus would appear to me for once, and I might thrust my hand into his side; or, if I might for once see him, or speak with him, how confirmed should I be! No doubt that thought has arisen in the minds of many. We shall not have such proofs, my brethren, but we shall have something near akin, to them, which will answer the same purpose.

I. The first head of my discourse shall be this: CRAVE NO SIGNS. If such signs be possible, crave them not. If there be dreams, visions, voices, ask not for them.

Crave not wonders, first, because it is dishonouring to the sacred Word to ask for them. You believe this Bible to be an inspired volume—the Book of God. The apostle Peter calls it "A more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." Are you not satisfied with that? When a person, in whose veracity you have the utmost confidence, bears testimony to this or that, if you straightway reply, "I would be glad of further evidence," you are slighting your friend, and casting unjust suspicion upon him. Will you cast suspicion upon the Holy Ghost, who, by this word, bears witness unto Christ? Oh, no! let us be content with his witness. Let us not wish to see, but remain satisfied to believe. If there be difficulties in believing, is it not natural there should be, when he that believes is finite, and the things to be believed are, in themselves, infinite? Let us accept the difficulties as being in themselves, in some measure, proofs of the correctness of our position, as inevitable attendants of heavenly mysteries, when they are looked at by such poor minds as ours. Let us believe the Word, and crave no signs.

Crave no signs, because it is unreasonable that we should desire more than we have already. The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the Word, should alone suffice us. Beside that, we have the testimony of saints and martyrs, who have gone before us, dying triumphant in the faith. We have the testimony of many still among us, who tell us that these things are so. In part, we have the testimony of our own conscience, of our own conversion, of our own after-experience, and this is convincing testimony. Let us be satisfied with it. Thomas ought to have been content with the testimony of Mary Magdalene, and the other disciples, but he was not. We ought to trust our brethren's word. Let us not be unreasonable in craving after proofs when already proofs are afforded us without stint.

Crave no signs, because it may be you will be presumptuous in so doing. Who are you, to set God a sign? What is it he is to do before you will believe in him? Suppose he does not choose to do it, are you therefore arrogantly to say, "I refuse to believe unless the Lord will do my bidding"? Do you imagine that any angel would demean himself to pay attention to you, who set yourself up to make demands of the Most High? Assuredly not. It is presumption which dares to ask of God anything more than the testimony of himself which he chooses to grant us in his Word

It is, moreover, damaging to ourselves to crave signs. Jesus says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thomas had his sign, and he believed; and so far so good, but he missed a

blessing peculiar to those who have not seen, and yet have believed. Do not, therefore, rob yourselves of the special favour which lights on those who, with no evidence but the witness of the Spirit of God, are prepared at once to believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life.

Again, crave no signs, for this craving is highly perilous. Translated according to many, and I think translated correctly, our Saviour said, "Reach hither thy finger, and put it into the print of the nails; and become not faithless, but believing," intending to indicate that Thomas, by degrees, would become faithless. His faith had grown to be so little that, if he continued insisting upon this and that, as a sign or evidence, that faith of his would get down to the very lowest; yea, he would have no faith left. "Become not faithless, but believing." Dear friends, if you began to seek signs, and if you were to see them, do you know what would happen? Why, you would want more; and when you had these, you would demand still more. Those who live by their feelings judge of the truth of God by their own condition. When they have happy feelings, then they believe; but if their spirits sink, if the weather happens to be a little damp, or if their constitution happens to be a little disordered, down go their spirits, and, straightway, down goes their faith. He that lives by a faith which does not rest on feeling, but is built upon the Word of the Lord, will remain fixed and steadfast as the mount of God; but he that craves for this thing and that thing, as a token for good at the hand of the Lord, stands in danger of perishing from want of faith. He shall not perish, if he has even a grain of living faith, for God will deliver him from the temptation; but the temptation is a very trying one to faith.

Crave, therefore, no sign. If you read a story of a person who saw a vision, or it you hear another declare that a voice spake to him—believe those things, or not, as you like; but do not desire them for yourself. These wonders may, or may not, be freaks of the imagination. I will not judge; but we must not rely upon them, for we are not to walk by sight, but by faith. Rely not upon anything that can be seen of the eyes, or heard of the ears; but simply trust him whom we know to be the Christ of God, the Rock of our salvation.

II. Secondly, when you want comfort, crave no sign, but **TURN TO THE WOUNDS OF OUR LORD**. You see what Thomas did. He wanted faith, and he looked for it to Jesus wounded. He says nothing about Christ's head crowned with glory. He does not say that he must see him "gird about the paps with a golden girdle." Thomas, even in his unbelief, is wise; he turns to his Lord's wounds for comfort. Whenever your unbelief prevails, follow in this respect the conduct of Thomas, and turn your eyes straightway to the wounds of Jesus. These are the fountains of never-failing consolation, from which, if a man doth once drink, he shall forget his misery, and remember his sorrow no more. Turn to the Lord's wounds; and if you do, what will you see?

First, you will see the tokens of your Master's love. O Lord Jesus, what are those wounds in thy side, and in thy hands? He answers, "These I endured when suffering for thee. How can I forget thee? I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. How can I ever fail to remember thee? On my very heart the spear has written thy name." Look at Jesus, dead, buried, risen, and then say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me"! There is no restorative for a sinking faith like a sight of the wounded Saviour. Look, soul, and live by the proofs of his death! Come and put thy finger, by faith, into the print of the nails, and these wounds shall heal thee of unbelief. The wounds of our Lord are the tokens of his love.

They are, again, the seals of his death, especially that wound in his side. He must have died; for "one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare witness." The Son of God did assuredly die. God, who made the heavens and the earth, took to himself our nature, and in one wondrous person he was both God and man; and lo! this wondrous Son of

God bore sufferings unutterable, and consummated all by his death. This is our comfort, for if he died in our stead, then we shall not die for our sins; our transgression is put away, and our iniquity is pardoned. If the sacrifice had never been slain we might despair; but since the spear-wound proves that the great Sacrifice really died, despair is slain, hope revives, and confidence rejoices.

The wounds of Jesus, next, are the marks of identity. By these we identify his blessed person after his resurrection. The very Christ that died has risen again. There is no illusion: there could be no mistake. It is not somebody else foisted upon us in his place; but Jesus who died has left the dead, for there are the marks of the crucifixion in his hands and in his feet, and there is the spear-thrust still. It is Jesus: this same Jesus. This is a matter of great comfort to a Christian this indisputably proven doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord. It is the keystone of the gospel arch. Take that away, or doubt it, and there remains nothing to console you. But because Jesus died and in the selfsame person rose again, and ever lives, therefore does our heart sweetly rest, believing that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"; and also that the whole of the work of Jesus is true, is completed, and is accepted of God.

Again, those wounds, those scars of our Lord, were the memorials of his love to his people. They set forth his love so that his chosen can see the tokens; but they are also memorials to himself. He condescendingly bears these as his reminders. In heaven, at this moment, upon the person of our blessed Lord, there are the scars of his crucifixion. Centuries have gone by, and yet he looks like a Lamb that has been slain. Our first glance will assure us that this is he of whom they said, "Crucify him; crucify him." Steadily look with the eyes of your faith into the glory, and see your Master's wounds, and say within yourself, "He has compassion upon us still: he bears the marks of his passion." Look up, poor sufferer! Jesus knows what physical pain means. Look up, poor depressed one! he knows what a broken heart means. Canst thou not perceive this? Those prints upon his hands, these sacred stigmata, declare that he has not forgotten what he underwent for us, but still has a fellow-feeling for us.

Once again, these wounds may comfort us because in heaven they are, before God and the holy angels, the perpetual ensigns of his finished work. That passion of his can never be repeated, and never needs to be: "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, he sat down on the right hand of God." But the memorials are always being presented before the infinite mind of God. Those memorials are, in part, the wounds in our Lord's blessed person. Glorified spirits can never cease to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"; for every time they gaze upon him they perceive his scars. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! No jewels that ever gemmed a king can look one-half so lustrous as these. Though he be God over all blessed for ever, yet to us, at least, his brightest splendour comes from his death.

My hearer, whensoever thy soul is clouded, turn thou to these wounds which shine like a constellation of five bright stars. Look not to thine own wounds, nor to thine own pains, or sins, or prayers, or tears, but remember that "with his stripes we are healed." Gaze, then; intently gaze, upon thy Redeemer's wounds it thou wouldest find comfort.

III. This brings me to my third point, whenever faith is staggered at all, SEEK SUCH HELPS FOR YOUR FAITH AS YOU MAY. Though we cannot literally put our finger into the print of the nails, and may not wish to do so, yet let us use such modes of recognition as we do possess. Let us put these to their utmost use; and we shall no longer desire to put our hand into the Saviour's side. We shall be perfectly satisfied without that. Ye that are troubled with doubts and fears, I give you these recommendations.

First, if you would have your faith made vivid and strong, study much the story of your Saviour's death. Read it: read it: read it: read it. "Tolle: lege," said the voice to Augustine, "Take it: read it." So say I. Take the four evangelists; take the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; take the twenty-second psalm; take all other parts of Scripture that relate to our suffering Substitute, and read them by day and by night, till you familiarize yourself with the whole story of his griefs and sin-hearing. Keep your mind intently fixed upon it; not sometimes, but continually. Crux lux: the cross is light. Thou shalt see it by its own light. The study of the narrative, if thou pray the Holy Ghost to enlighten thee, will beget faith in thee; and thou wilt, by its means, be very greatly helped, till, at last, thou wilt say, "I cannot doubt. The truth of the atonement is impressed upon my memory, my heart, my understanding. The record has convinced me."

Next, if this suffice not, frequently contemplate the sufferings of Jesus. I mean by that, when you have read the story, sit down, and try and picture it. Let your mind conceive it as passing before you. Put yourself into the position of the apostles who saw him die. No employment will so greatly strengthen faith, and certainly none will be more enjoyable!

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,

which before the cross I spend,

Life and health and peace possessing

From the sinner's dying Friend."

An hour would be grandly spent if occupied in turning over each little detail, item, and incident in the marvellous death by which you are redeemed from death and hell. You will be surprised to find how this familiarizing of yourself with it, by the help of the Holy Spirit, will make it as vivid to you as if you saw it; and it will have a better effect upon your mind than the sight of it would have done; for probably the actual sight would have passed away from your mind, and have been forgotten, while the contemplation of the sorrowful scene will sink deep into your soul, and leave eternal lines! You will do well, first, to read and know the narrative, and then to contemplate it carefully and earnestly—I mean, not to think of it for a minute or two at chance times, but to take an hour or two that you can specially set apart on purpose to consider the story of your Saviour's death. I am persuaded, if you do this, it will be more helpful to you than putting his finger into the print of the nails was to Thomas.

What next? why, dear friends, the Lord has a way of giving his people wonderful realizations. I hope I shall not say anything incorrect when I remark that there are times with us when the Lord is present with us, and we are strongly impressed with that fact, and therefore we act under a sense of that presence as if the divine glory were actually visible. Do you know what it is to write a letter to a friend feeling as if the Lord Jesus were looking over your shoulder? I know what it is at times to stand here and preach, and feel my Lord so near me that if I had literally seen him it would not have surprised me. Have you never, in the watches of the night, lain quiet when there was no sound but the ticking of the watch, and thought of your Lord till, though you knew there was no form before you, you were just as certain that he was there as if you could see his sorrowful countenance? In quiet places all alone—you scarcely like to tell the story—in the lone wood, and in the upper chamber—you have said, "If he spake I should not be more certain of his presence; and if he smiled upon me I should not be surer of his love." These realizations have sometimes been so joyfully overwhelming that for years you have been lifted by them beyond all power of doubt. These holy summer days banish the frosts of the soul. Whenever a doubt is suggested to me about the existence of my Lord and Master, I feel that I can laugh the tempter to scorn, for I have seen him, and

spoken with him. Not with these eyes, but with the eyes of my inner life, I have beheld my Lord, and communed with him. Wonder not that I am not among the crew of the black, piratical ship of "Modern Thought."

Nor is it merely in seasons of enjoyment that we get these helps, but in times of deep distress. Prostrate with pain, unable to enjoy any comfort, unable even to sleep, I have seen the soul of the believer as happy as if all sounds were marriage peals. Some of us know what it is to be right gleesome, glad, and joyous in hours of fierce trial, because Christ has been so near. In times of losses and bereavements, when the sorrow stung you to the quick, and you thought before it came, that you never could bear it, yet have you been so sustained by a sight of the sacred head once wounded, and by fellowship with him in his sufferings, that you have said, "What are my griefs compared with his?" You have forgotten your sorrows and sung for joy of heart, as those that make merry. If you have been helped in this way, it will have all the effect upon you that ever could have come of putting your finger into the print of the nails. If, perchance, you have been given up to die, and have, mentally, gone through the whole process of dying, expecting soon to stand before the bar of God, and have been happy, and even exultant, then you could not doubt the reality of a religion that bore you up above the surging billows. Now that you are again restored to life for a little longer time, the recollection of your buoyant spirits, in what you thought to be your dying hours, will answer all the purpose to you, I think, of putting your finger into the nail-prints.

Sometimes the strengthening influence may be afforded under the stress of temptation. If ever, young man, you have had a strong temptation hurling itself against you, and your feet have almost gone'ay, let me not say "young man"; but if ever a man or a woman of any age has had to cry out, "God, help me: how shall I escape out of this?" and you have turned your eyes and seen your Lord and beheld his wounds; and if you have felt at that moment that the temptation had lost all power, you have had a seal from the Lord, and your faith has been confirmed. If at the sight of your Lord you have exclaimed, in presence of the temptation, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" after that, you have had the best proof of your Redeemer's power to save. What better or more practical proof could you desire?

In these times, when the foundations of our faith are constantly being undermined, one is sometimes driven to say to himself, "Suppose it is not true." As I stood, the other night, beneath the sky, and watched the stars, I felt my heart going up to the great Maker with all the love that I was capable of. I said to myself, "What made me love God as I know I do? What made me feel an anxiety to be like him in purity? Whatever made me long to obey my God cannot be a lie." I know that it was the love of Jesus for me that changed my heart, and made me, though once careless and indifferent to him, now to pant with strong desires to honour him. What has done this? Not a lie, surely. A truth, then, has done it. I know it by its fruits. If this Bible were to turn out untrue, and if I died and went before my Maker, could I not say to him, "I believed great things of thee, great God; if it be not so, yet did I honour thee by the faith I had concerning thy wondrous goodness, and thy power to forgive"? and I would cast myself upon his mercy without fear. But we do not entertain such doubts; for those dear wounds continually prove the truth of the gospel, and the truth of our salvation by it. Incarnate Deity is a thought that was never invented by poet's mind, nor reasoned out by philosopher's skill. Incarnate Deity, the notion of the God that lived, and bled, and died in human form, instead of guilty man, it is itself its own best witness. The wounds are the infallible witness of the gospel of Christ.

Have you not felt those wounds very powerful to you in the from of assistance in time of duty? You said, "I cannot do it, it is too hard for me." You looked to Jesus wounded, and you could do anything. A sight of the bleeding Christ has often filled us with enthusiasm, and so with power: it has rendered us mighty with the

omnipotence of God. Look at the church of Christ in all ages. Kings and princes did not know what to do with her. They vowed that they would destroy her. Their persecuting edicts went forth, and they put to death thousands upon thousands of the followers of Christ. But what happened? The death of Jesus made men willing to die for him. No pain, no torture, could keep back the believing host. They loved Jesus so that though their leaders fell by bloody deaths, another rank came on, and yet another, and another, till despots saw that neither dungeon, nor rack, nor fire could stop the march of the army of Christ. It is so now. Christ's wounds pour life into the church by transfusion: the life-blood of the church of God is from Jesus' wounds. Let us know its power and feel it working within us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And as for those who do not trust him, what shall I say? The Lord help you to do so at once; for as long as you do not trust him, you are under an awful curse, for it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha" cursed at the coming of the Lord. May it not be so with you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON' John 20:18-31.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" 785, 937, 282.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED READERS, Thanks be unto God for thirty-four volumes of sermons thus completed. May they continue to be blest of God long after the preacher and his present readers have entered into rest. The speaker is still laid aside by weakness, but the word of the Lord never loses its power. His voice can only be heard of a few thousands, but the printed page will talk to multitudes. Let us pray that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit may sound in the heart of readers for many generations to come.

A book may enclose the spikenard of a truth, which, when forgotten, it shall give back to men with all its first perfume. The generation which now is may treat the doctrines of grace as if they were worthless, but these priceless gems will yet be prized by a more enlightened age, and judged to be of infinitely more value than all the tinsel which amuses our contemporaries. I am content to preach today to a comparatively small circle, since I believe that the truths I deliver are revealed of God for the salvation of multitudes innumerable, and that in some future day the Lord whom I serve will vindicate every faithful testifier of them from the reproach of men. At the same time, I praise God that even so many have been found faithful to the ancient faith of our fathers. Grace be with them all.

At the close of the year I salute my brethren, and entreat a place in their daily prayers. Ask that I may be allowed to return to my pulpit in health, and may see the cause of our Lord prospering everywhere.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Mentone, Dec. 20th, 1888.

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