

Not Seen and Yet Have Believed

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the story of Thomas in John 20, highlighting the importance of faith in Christ even without physical evidence. It emphasizes the need to trust in the Lord regardless of visible results, focusing on the blessing of believing without seeing. The speaker encourages honest doubt and the perseverance of faith, pointing out the danger of relying solely on tangible outcomes for spiritual assurance.

Scripture: John 20:24, Matthew 11:28, 1 Peter 1:8, Hebrews 11:1, 1 Corinthians 3:6, James 2:17, Matthew 7:22

Topics: "Faith without Sight", "Overcoming Doubt"

Description

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Transcript

Go to John 20. John 20, verses 19-31. What we're going to read.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, so this is post-resurrection, right? Christ is during the time of His appearing. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the door is being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and He stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you.

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.

If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. Now, verse 24, Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, We've seen the Lord.

But he said to them, Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into His side, I will never believe. Eight days later, his disciples were inside again. And Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. Then He said to Thomas, Put your finger here. And see My hands.

And put out your hand. And place it into My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

Thomas answered Him, My Lord and My God. Jesus said to him, Have you believed? This is what we're going to really look at. Verse 29, some call this the last of Christ beatitudes.

There's a blessing pronounced in this verse upon people who have a certain attitude. Jesus said to him, Have you believed because you've seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet they have believed. So I want to ponder that beatitude of being blessed by having faith in the Lord regardless of what is seen or felt with the physical eyes.

The Lord commends this attitude. So it matters to you. It matters to me.

As Christians, we want to know what attitudes that the Lord commends. And we want those to be attitudes that are true of us. I hope that's your desire.

This isn't just having some attitude of wishful thinking, but it is having assurance in the Lord and His faithfulness even if they had not seen Him. There's a raw trust in God, in His Word, in what He has said and what He has spoken. And I want to show as well that this isn't just about initially adopting this mindset when you initially believe.

But this is something to carry with you all the way as a Christian. You understand what I'm saying? An unbeliever might have all these arguments why they won't trust Christ, and you're convincing them to believe in the Savior and take Him at His Word. Well, that's not where faith ends.

We're saved by faith and then we go walking by faith throughout this whole journey as a Christian. And that's something that's for us who are already saved. Are you as a Christian going on by faith even when tangible, concrete results are not evident and are not seen by you? Do you keep it on with the Lord trusting Him? And this life of faith, of trust in the Lord, it's not one where we are trying to dictate to God when or where and how He's going to reveal Himself to us.

Rather, we are committed to recognize the Lord in every circumstance of our lives. We're trusting that He's demonstrating His power. Even if we can't articulate it and put our finger on what He is doing, we're trusting by faith.

Whether it meets our expectations or not, whether it meets our preconceived ideas or not, we're trusting the Lord is faithful. Amen? Is that true of you? Is that what you guys desire? So first, a couple of observations just from the context here. One question I had, what way does Thomas differ from the other disciples? And the reason I ask that, if you look at 20-20, when Christ gets there, what's He do? Verse 20, He showed them His hands and His side.

So the thing Thomas wanted to have, the other disciples, they got it. Well, what's the difference between the other disciples and Thomas? It's true He wasn't there. But again, there are many things that the other disciples, if they were in His shoes, could they have responded in the same way as He? Well, that's just speculation.

We don't know. But what we do know is this, Thomas wasn't there, and when Christ came, what was Thomas' response after the fact? It was one, I would say, of a real stubborn doubt and skepticism of the Lord. He says right there, look at the end of verse 25.

Unless I see in His hands and the mark of His nails, and he goes on and he says I will never believe. That's amazing. It's saying this or else.

I'm not going to believe unless I get this. There's nothing indicating the other disciples had that sort of stubborn persistence that he's having right here. So I think that's the difference here with Thomas.

He really was insistent on visible proof before believing. I must have this or else. And how long did this persist? How long was he in this state for? It's right there in the text.

Eight days. I don't know about you, but sometimes you forget Thomas was like this for eight days. This all didn't just happen on a day.

Eight days. What would have happened if Christ did not come and take initiative to Thomas? Would the eight days have gone on to ten days? We don't know. Again, speculation.

But verse 26, eight days later. So this man is in this state of refusing to believe for an eight-day period. That's the context here.

And I think, you know, is unbelief... What type of sin is unbelief? Is it one of those little sins? One of those respectful sins? Is it a major thing? What type of sin is unbelief? Yeah, it is such a root sin. What is one of the first things Jesus says the Spirit of God has come to convict the world of in John 16? He came to convict the world of lust and of lying. No, what's it say? Of unbelief that they do not believe in the Lord.

So this is a sin of great gravity. Unbelief is basically disregarding the significance of Christ's Word. It's ultimately calling the Lord a liar.

In a way, unbelief is the sin that leads to people willfully going on in sin even after receiving the knowledge of the truth, which we see the condemnation that people get in that regard, right? One other thought here from the context that someone kind of mentioned it. Thomas missed the meeting. Why was he not there when Christ initially came? If he was there when Christ initially came, what would he have gotten to seeing along with all the other guys? The holes, the hands, which is exactly what he wanted to see.

And what does that then seem that would have alleviated? The eight-day period he had, he wouldn't have faced this eight days of refusal as he did. And so many think rightly, they pull out an application, and so I want to pull that out for you all right here because I think it's very valid. J.C. Ryle, he said regarding Thomas' absence, he said, never let your place be empty when the means of grace are going on.

The sermon that we needlessly miss or the sermon you sit under and are distracted with as being delivered, could be a word and season for your soul. The assembly for prayer and praise we needlessly miss may be the very gathering that would have cheered and established and quickened our hearts. We little know how dependent our spiritual health is on little, regular, habitual helps and how much we suffer if we miss our medicine.

That's a right application. I'm sure you guys can think of times where you missed out and you could have had something that you exactly needed from your Father to help you spiritually. So, Thomas refuses to

believe unless he sees.

He goes on for eight days. This is a grave sin, this sin of unbelief. The Bible as a whole really condemns unbelief.

And then look what gets Thomas out of this. Look what happens here. Look at John 20.

Eight days later, v. 26, his disciples were inside again. Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them.

He said, peace be with you. And then look at v. 27. Then he said to Thomas... What does that make it sound like is happening right here? What encouragement do you get right there just from that phrase, then he said to Thomas? Who's taking initiative here to approach Thomas and console him in regards to his doubts and his struggles? Who's doing that? How did Christ even know what Thomas was going through? There's a lot that happened in eight days we don't know about.

Maybe someone even had mentioned it to the Lord. We don't know. We could assume.

But brethren, Christ here gets in the room and John records, he goes right to the man and he deals specifically with the man's doubts. I find that incredibly comforting. You and I, we could have some sort of doubt.

And the Lord Jesus is taking initiative to come and help us get the very truth that we need to get us out. And you see Jesus' statement at the end of v. 27 after He's had Him place His finger in His hands, He says, do not disbelieve, but believe. The point you could render, don't continue on in your unbelief, believe Me.

I mean, Christ is there trying to help this man have faith and trust in Him. So to me, that's an encouraging reality about the Lord Jesus' character. And then we have right here Thomas' declaration in v. 28.

Thomas answered Him, My Lord and My God. Which you find in John 1. You first find in John 1 where Christ is the Word. And then you find He's identified as God incarnate in the flesh.

And here Thomas is expressing both those things which John is trying to bring out in this Gospel. Thomas expresses at this point both of these things are true. He's even fulfilling John 8:28 where it says, when you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He.

And that's happened. Christ has been resurrected. He's been lifted up.

And here Thomas, his eyes are open. He knows that Christ is He. And he makes this glorious confession, My Lord and My God.

And so brethren, you can go from eight days of stubborn unbelief and rejection to trust the Lord, and the Lord gets involved with your heart and is merciful to you, and all of a sudden, you're out of it. You're out of that slough of despondence. So thank God for that kindness.

So that's kind of some of what's going on here. But I want to think about v. 29. V. 29, John 20, 29 if you just got here.

The Lord's exhortation to Thomas and to them all, that those who have not seen yet have believed are blessed. Now, look at your Bible. Look at v. 29.

When He's talking about these people who are blessed, who have believed without seeing, who in the context is He immediately referring to? Before you go and apply it elsewhere. Look at the grammar. You guys tell me.

Who is He immediately referring to in v. 29? What's in the present tense in this verse? Maybe it's not as easy to notice in the ESV. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have. So He's not talking about us.

This isn't primarily about you and me. This is about people alive right then when Christ is speaking. This matters.

There's a real point of application here. This really matters to get this. But yet have believed is present tense.

Therefore, making reference to people all alive at that time, and maybe even people in the room at that time who already believed without experiencing the risen Christ. Now, does it obviously apply to us? Yes, I believed in the Lord Jesus without seeing Him. So there's truth to this for us.

But, if you think about what this is saying, think of this, any of your own unbelief, let's say you struggle and you have this thought, well, I wish I could have seen the Lord. Brethren, there were people back then who Christ was actually alive presently. Let's say He's on the other end of the city.

Well, I want to go see Him over there. They didn't need that. He was actually physically present still prior to His ascension.

And they believed even without having seen Him after the resurrection. In an era when He was still on the earth. Imagine if Christ was still on the earth.

Right now, and you think that will really help me have faith. There were people back then who they didn't even try to go to Him to believe. They believed without even seeing Him.

And so this, to me, really reproves any sort of unbelief that we might have or thinking that, well, I've got to go see the Lord. So if they believed without seeing when He could have been seen, how can one complain now and demand a sign if those people didn't demand a sign? Do you get what I'm saying? To me, that's a strong exhortation there. Did that make sense or was I not clear? Do you get what I'm saying? Enough head nods? And imagine if you were back then and you knew Jesus was in the same town as you, and yet, you just believe in Him and you don't even have to go look at Him.

You don't have to go touch the holes in His hands. I mean, Jesus is saying there's people that was true of them back then. Those people, they're blessed.

They believe without having to see. And so that should encourage us now where we don't have Him in a physical place where we could go see the Lord Jesus Christ. So, I think Jesus' exhortation here really underscores a crucial point.

Did the Lord meet the demands of Thomas? He did, right? How the Lord heard about where Thomas is at or knew where Thomas is at, regardless of how we got there, Christ comes in and the very thing that

Thomas was desiring, Christ indulges and gives him what he desired. Now, should we then assume that this is the approach to follow? Is to go and do exactly what Thomas is doing? No, that's part of why Jesus says what He says in v. 29. Have you believed because you've seen Me? No, blessed are those who have not seen and yet they have believed.

And so this example of demanding to see, waiting for eight days, and then believing, I don't think that's being commended to you and I. And to make it more applicable for us in 2023, some people, they're demanding a certain type of grief. Well, I don't have enough godly grief to believe. Or people are demanding a certain subjective feeling where you get into people idolizing the baptism of the Holy Spirit and I have to experience this.

Jesus is saying, don't put that up to Me as something you've got to have in order to believe. You trust Me with raw faith, with raw trust in My Word. You don't have to have this.

So Jesus is encouraging us to cultivate a faith that goes beyond the need for physical proof. Trusting in His words and His promises without relying on some immediate visible confirmation. I mean, we love immediate visible confirmation.

We can find a great comfort from that, but Christ is saying there's an attitude that is far more blessed than wanting some immediate confirmation that you can witness with your own eyes. So what is this conduct that is blessed by the Lord? Thomas came to believe by relying on an outward sign that appealed to his senses of sight. Yes, the Lord gave him that.

Right? But he was requiring tangible evidence to validate the reality of Christ's resurrection. And Christ is saying you don't have to have that. That isn't necessary.

I gave it to him, but it's not necessary. So in his case, yeah, the physical presence of Christ, the opportunity to touch his wounds, that served as convincing proof. Thomas wanted that.

He's saying he needed that. And I think the same thing can happen to some of us. We, like Thomas, say, unless I get this, I won't believe.

And you don't want to look at that and say, well, look, the Lord met those needs that he had. No, there are people out there for 50 years still with their demand to the Lord. Lord, the moment you do this, then I'm going to believe in you.

They're going to go to hell with that type of a mindset, stiff-arming God, and they're not taking His Son at His word. Well, Christ says there's a great blessedness that rests on those who believe without seeing. This includes all the Old Testament saints who believed in the prophecy of Christ.

They had simple faith without visible age testifying to the blessedness of faith in God. And brethren, this shouldn't surprise us because Christianity is not about ceremonies. It's not about rules.

It's not about feelings. It's not about group affiliation. It's not about any of those things primarily.

It's all about the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we can fall to the same thing. Demanding a sign? Or you can think about Naaman in the Old Testament, right? That's always a very striking example.

And we don't need to turn there, but just think about Naaman's initial response to what the prophet said to do in order to be healed. What was his initial response? What did he say? Yeah, his instant response is to

argue with the cure and say that it's not advanced enough or it's not as spectacular enough as I require. It was what he said.

He says, I thought he would. So he thought the prophet was going to come out and do something, and his expectations were crushed. And therefore, he had a hard time to believe.

So the same thing with some of us. We think it's going to feel like this or that. Naaman, he thought he knew a better way.

He said, are not Abnah and Pharah or these rivers better than all the waters of Israel? Can't I go wash in them and be clean? That faith doesn't speak in that way. Is this better? Is this better? No, it's believing by faith in the Lord and what He has spoken. It's not arguing.

It's not questioning God's ways. Some will assert, if I'd only witnessed Christ in His crucifixion, then surely I would believe. They kind of take pride in this well-known statement that seeing is believing.

Have you heard that before? Seeing is believing. This is in direct opposition to God's perspective which asserts believing is seeing. Hebrews 11, faith is the substance of things.

Hope for the evidence of things. Not seeing. Notice this progression in John 11.

Verse 40, just flip back a couple pages. We're going to be right back in chapter 20. John 11, verse 40.

This is amazing what he says here. Jesus said to her, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would what? See the glory of God. It's not reversed.

The text doesn't say, did I not tell you that if you see, you would believe. That's not what it says. You see the progression? Christ views things in this life that as you believe, you see.

What's keeping people from seeing the glory of God is not they need more evidence. They need to have faith and believe. They need to trust.

That's what he says. Did I not tell you? If you believed, you would see. It's not you see and you believe.

You believe and then you see. So that's really what we're looking at. Do we have this attitude? Is this how we look and live our lives as Christians? As people who we don't have to see.

We're trusting by faith in Christ as blessed is the person who takes me at my word in this way. And as I said, this isn't just a matter of the lost being converted, but it's for us throughout our entire life as Christians. Hebrews 11, these all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen and greeted them from afar.

So they didn't receive it. It's something that was far off. They acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Brethren, you live this Christian life and you have these expectations. You're going to see this. You're going to see that.

You're going to see all these things. God doesn't promise that in your own lifetime, with your own eyes, you're going to see these things. It might be something that someone else at a later date is going to see happen, and yet, you were faithful with what God gave you.

And that's really what matters. It's not so much what you see, but you're trusting the Lord today by faith. 2 Corinthians 5, So we are always of good courage.

We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Oh, we need that reminder. We walk by faith, not by sight.

Now, think for a minute in the same chapter in John 20, do signs really give that which we think we do? Who is someone in John 20 who got to see Christ and it really didn't do what you thought it would have done? Earlier in John 20. Look at John 20. We did not read this.

Verse 12. Look at Mary. This is interesting.

Mary got to see Him. Well, what happened when she saw Him? What happened? She didn't recognize Him. She didn't see Him.

And what was she thinking in her mind? She already thought she knew where Christ was and therefore she missed Christ where He truly was. Right? Isn't that exactly what happened? Look what she says in verse 13. She said to them, they've taken away my Lord.

Not that He resurrected, that His body got taken. They've taken away my Lord. And I don't know where they've laid Him having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she didn't know that it was Jesus.

So she gets Jesus physically there. But, the mind is already thinking, well, His body was taken out of the tomb. Not that He was resurrected.

The body got removed. So in the midst of that unbelief, guess what? She doesn't actually see Him when He's actually there. You see? I mean, that's the terrifying reality.

You could actually get the opportunity to see, and yet you totally miss the reality. And I don't take this as Christ being in some disguise. I think her whole focus was on where they took the body.

And so faith was absent. She failed to grasp the fullness of the blessing that was right beside her. You know, we do the same thing.

You see, Christian, the Lord can be present in your life. He can be at work in your life. But you think He's already been taken and gone.

And you don't see Him. He's right there. He's right there helping you, but you don't even recognize it.

And you could say, well, man, she was really zealous to find the absent Lord. Shouldn't we commend Mary for her zeal? No, she was refusing to find and recognize the very One who was there and believe in what He had already said. And you know what? As long as she's refusing to trust that Christ is risen and that this is the Christ, guess what's going to happen? You're going to be in sorrow and darkness.

The exact same thing happens to us. And so you might be here this morning. Christ is at work in your life.

He's sanctifying you, but you think He's gone. No wonder there's sorrow and darkness. Where's Christ at? He's right there.

He's right in front of you. You're talking to Him. Where are you at, Lord? He's right there.

You see? And you know what? When's the sorrow and darkness going to go away? When you realize, oh, there He is. I'm looking for the Lord and there He is right there. Faith, unbelief misses it.

So you might be like Mary. You're on some earnest quest to find the Savior, thinking He's missing and He's not missing. And you just waste all this energy with some expectation of what it's going to be like to find the Savior when He was always right there by you.

This happened to the men on the road to Emmaus. The exact same thing in Luke 24. And I mean, Christ is even telling them about Himself from the Old Testament, and they still don't know it's Christ.

I mean, they must have been thinking, this is a really good teacher, whoever this guy is. In Luke 24, 30, it was later when He was at the table, it says their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Isn't that amazing? This makes you think of Luke 16, 31.

He said to Him, if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. You see, we so need supernatural faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that even if someone dies and is raised from the dead and you witness it, that isn't going to make you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And faith, it's a gift from God.

It's something that the Lord, He opens our eyes to see. Are we commanded to exercise faith? Are you here today commanded to trust the Lord? Absolutely. Is it true that anything that does not proceed from faith is a sin? Absolutely.

Is it true that, yes, we are having assurance in the Lord and His Word and what He has spoken regardless of what we can see? Yes. I mean, may the Lord help this beatitude all the more be true of us right here in John 20, that regardless of what we see, regardless of what we feel, we're able to trust the Lord. We're able to believe the Lord even if we don't recognize what's happening.

There's so much that's happening in our lives that we just can't recognize. And it's almost like, Thomas, we demand, Lord, show me exactly what You're doing right now or I'm not going to be content. That's unbelief.

That's unbelief speaking. So, I was really stirred by all of this this week as I was studying by something Paul Washer shared in 2005. I just thought the insight as an application for the Christian was very profound.

And so let me just share what he said. But Paul, he asked in his sermon, he asked this question, he said, who has the greater privilege? The preacher who sees thousands of conversions or the preacher who in his life labors for years and from what he can tell, he witnesses no fruit? It's a very interesting question. Now, the initial response would be what? The initial response would be to say the man who sees all the fruit has the greater faith or has a greater commendation from God.

Why would we say that? What's behind that? Yeah, and I think even in reformed communities, people put such an emphasis on results and in an inordinate way, the Bible does not. And this isn't just some prosperity gospel thing. So yeah, who has the greater? You tend to think the guy with the greater privilege is the guy who sees all the conversions.

Not the guy who labors and sees no fruit. Now listen, I think Paul's hits on these very truths were pointed out in John 20. Paul went on to share about a man who saw much fruit and conversions, and then it all

stopped.

The man fell into despair, was depressed. He even thought about suicide. I don't know if he was referring to Evan Roberts or if he was referring to Duncan Campbell, but you look at church history, as you read church history, there's men who saw thousands of conversions, they saw great moves of God, and then it all stopped.

The real test of their faith and their trust in the Lord is really going to be right at that moment. When it stops, how do they respond? And if a man, when it stops, responds with depression and suicidal thoughts, what does that indicate about the man? You tell me, what's it indicate about the individual? What was really propping him up all those years and encouraging him onward? It seems like so much of it was the results, it was the fruit, it wasn't the Savior. Paul Osher went on to share in this example, he said don't look at the man with all these results as the great man of faith necessarily, is his point.

It's not saying that man might not have a trust in the Lord, but it's going to be tested when all that, well, not only in this life when it all stops, but at the judgment bar, right? Paul says look at a man out there, a woman out there, ministering and laboring for years and years and years and years, and they see nothing of benefit, nothing of reaping from all their sowing. And yet every day they go out and they continue in the same thing. Is it easier to continue in the same thing when you have results or you have no results? When you have results, it's real simple, right? Like if you go and you go and do something and you get no results year after year, it's easier if you get results.

Because it's almost like the results are a stamp that God is with me. And it very well might be a stamp that God is with you, but not having results, is that automatically a stamp that God isn't in the work? If we think that way, we've got problems. I mean, what if the very result isn't actually natives being converted? It's you as a Christian being sanctified in the midst of those pagan people and being made more and more like the Savior.

Paul Washer went on to say, yet every day they go out and continue. He said if you see fruit in your ministry, count that as a privilege. Count that as a blessing.

If you see many of your prayers answered in all of these things, count that a blessing. But maybe, just maybe, if you're faithful to the Lord and you see absolutely nothing all the days of your life, then it is a greater privilege unto you has been given the greater privilege than has been given to Edwards or Whitefield or Spurgeon. Unto you has been given the greater privilege to demonstrate faith beyond what those other men were called to demonstrate.

It is not hard to demonstrate faith when every time you open your mouth, 10,000 people are standing there wanting to hear you. What's faith is when you've got to preach for 120 years and no one even listened to you. You see? And we get that reversed.

We get that reversed. And Paul, he went on, he said, in Peru, I saw countless people come to know the Lord as a missionary. We saw revivals.

We saw people being swept into the kingdom. We saw all sorts of things. And then Paul, he humbly says it had nothing to do with him.

He said you know what it had to do with? It had to do with unknown people who were in Peru and labored there for 80 years without seeing one convert. That's what it has to do with. They sowed and another

person reaped.

They sowed all their life. They died in the dust and they saw nothing. But in the resurrection when all of that is done, countless multitudes of Peruvians are standing before the throne, then the true patriarchs of Peru will be called forward to receive their reward, while all the little boys who acted like big shots will be standing behind them.

So if you think that you're not one of these privileged men and privileged women who see so much fruit and so many things and everything else, just possibly it's just the other way around. Maybe guys like me need to see fruit because we're so weak in our faith that if we don't see fruit, we'll fall into despair. Very humble of them to share in that way in 2005.

Even that last thought. Maybe guys like me need to see fruit because we're so weak in our faith that if we don't, we'll fall into despair. That's exactly what happened with Thomas, brethren.

Don't you see it? Thomas was the man who needed to see the results in order to believe. And Jesus looks and says there's others. They believe they didn't require that.

Blessed are they. You're going to be tested. Maybe you're already facing this test.

Maybe you're in this test right now as a Christian. You're laboring and pouring your guts out for something, whatever it might be. It might be a mother over children.

Whatever sphere it is, a worker with co-workers at work in your Bible study, and you don't see results, you don't see anything evidently happening that you can see with your hands or touch with your hands, or see with your eyes, Satan wants you to give in to discouragement right at that point and to throw in the towel and think God must not be in this. But real test of your faith is will you and I persevere through all of that even if in our own lifetime we never actually witness these results that we are praying for? 1 Corinthians, Paul says, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. Only God who gives growth and he who plants and he who waters are one.

And each will receive his wages according to his labor. It's a lot easier to be the one who comes in and does the reaping than the one who does the planting and the watering, right? Not a perfect application, but the Levies were at Sid's and Philip had a garden there and he's laboring on this garden. Now, you got to reap fruit from it, but then you guys had to move away.

Imagine if he had planted and all that watering and the plants had not come up and damn, we've got to go move. And then someone else moves in there. Well, now they get to enjoy all the fruit.

So you could almost feel like, well, what I did was worth nothing. That is a lie. What you did and what the other person did, what's Paul say? It's only God ultimately anyways.

God is the ultimate One. Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. That's our problem, right? We think we're something when we're nothing and Paul says in Galatians, we deceive ourselves.

So, my point in this is not to make you lose a desire to see people converted. That's the last thing that I would want. But it's to step back and realize we put too much weight on what we see.

At least I have that problem. Maybe none of you all suffer with that problem. And if you don't, I know why you don't suffer with that problem.

Because you are restfully trusting in the Lord and you're not insecure in your relationship with Christ. Now, I know I shared this once back, but you know what? Probably some weren't here and you maybe already forgot it, so I'm going to share it again. Because it fit with this as well.

But I gave that example. Thirty-three years, the Moravian missionaries toiled on amid great discouragements, and they considered abandoning the work. And then in 1804, they were preaching on the verse, the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

And a woman got converted. Thirty-three years, no converts. A woman gets saved.

And it leads to massive amounts of people being converted in that village. What if you were the missionary who was there for 32 years, you got cancer on the field, and you died of cancer there a year before all that happened? Would you be okay with that? Would I be okay with that? Brethren, just think. Thirty-three years.

Evan has just got to Nepal. Wilkinson's have just got to Nepal. The Garriss have got to Nepal.

What if we're here 30 years? Do we want to see conversions and revival? Absolutely. What if in God's sovereign plan, they're over there sowing the seed and watering, and someone in 50 years is going to see 1,000 converted? What if that's God's will for all those people laboring over there? What if in 30 years, we don't get one report of anyone being converted from this time on? If that's God's plan, are we okay with that? And you can say that's unbelief, James. Go tell that to Jeremiah.

Go tell that to Ezekiel. Go tell that to other prophets in the Old Testament. I don't know the timeline in your life and in my life and the people that we are going to be speaking the truth to and what that will ultimately lead to in the end.

Am I going to be praying that people will be saved even today? You better believe I'm going to be praying for that to happen. At the same time, I've got to humbly recognize I'm laboring by faith. I might not see or witness this or that, but I've got to trust the Lord and you've got to have the exact same approach, brother.

You've got to trust God. If I was that missionary for 32 years, no converts, and then I die a year before revival breaks out, you know what? When you get to heaven, you're not going to be up there grumbling. You're actually going to be up there and you're going to see how much actually happened in those 32 years that you were so hardened in your heart to recognize as you lived on this earth without any tangible evidences of a movement of God.

I think many don't have stamina to have faith in God for 33 years and see almost no results. They're insecure. They question whether God is with them.

Brethren, we want to be a people that Christ is on the other side of the town and He's got holes in His hands and He's not even ascended and we don't even have to go. Because we know who He is. We know what He said.

And thus saith the Lord, and we trust Him without having to go see Him over there. Because we know who He is. We believe in Him.

We're taking Him at His Word. And you know what? We've got to be that right now because He isn't over there. He did ascend.

But brethren, He ascended and He sent the Spirit and that is better for us. So we should find comfort in this and be able to be stirred up regardless of what we see. And I know one might say, well, man, you're going to take wrong comfort in this and lack a desire for conversions.

Well, I would say, you could abuse this in multiple ways. I get that. What truth in the Bible can't you take and abuse and twist? You could take this in a wrong way and be hyper-Calvinistic and have a false comfort.

Sure. But you know what people also do that we don't actually deal with enough? They take all the supposed results they see and they wrongly find comfort in that. Paul didn't even do that.

He said, I don't know of anything against myself. I'm not thereby acquitted. He says this to the Lord He's going to judge.

Paul lived trusting these people are my crown, yet at the same time recognizing when it's all been said and done, what really mattered, what was really true, we'll be seeing then. I remember the brother, the Far East missionary, he was sharing at some pastor, I think it was like 30 years of pastoring, and he was making that comment. He said that day all the curtains are going to be moved back and we're going to see what's wood, hay, and stubble.

And his perception was so much more is going to be burned than people recognize. I think that's because we can have so much pride. And we latch on to results.

And it fuels and motivates us to live for the Lord. What if you don't get that? Are you going to live for Him anyways? But, we should eagerly pray. A missionary working in Tahiti was having years of what appeared to be fruitless labor.

The director is almost determined to abandon the work. And A.T. Pearson, he records, Dr. Howis, chaplain to the Countess of Huddington, one of the founders of the society and father and liberal supporter of the South Sea Mission, earnestly opposed such an abandonment of the field. He backed his arguments by a further donation of \$1,000, which \$1,000 is a lot of money 200 years ago.

Reverend Matthew Wilkes, the pastor of John Williams, asserted his commitment to the mission, expressing a willingness to sell the clothes from his back rather than give up. You see, we need that type of determination. And you know what happened? They persisted in this.

And they wrote all these letters of encouragement to the missionaries in 1813. All these letters to the missionaries to encourage them to not quit are on a boat. And as they're coming to the missionaries, the missionaries also wrote a report about the whole island being converted.

And they're sending that back. And so by the time they got the notes of encouragement, the other people back there praying got the notes about the island being swept into the kingdom of God. Stuff like that, it should excite us.

It should stir our faith up. It should make us pray, Lord, save and create a church in all seven provinces of Nepal. You see, there's a balance.

We're pulled in multiple ways. Well, that's about all I have. One other thing here I think is meaningful and important to realize.

Conrad Murrell, you know what he said about Thomas? He called him Honest Thomas. Right? Thomas was honest. Maybe there was other people there who were thinking the same thing he was.

I'm not going to believe unless I see. Well, guess what? Thomas actually said it. And he stuck by it for eight days.

And you know what? The Lord honored the honesty and came to him and encouraged him and said, don't disbelieve, but believe. And so brethren, I don't know where you're at today, but you know what? God wants you to have an honest heart. And if what is full of your heart is unbelief, it's doubts, take your honest heart to the Lord.

Even if it is some unbelief that is disrespectful of the Lord, confess that to Him. And I trust you'll find that the same Christ here in the body who is willing to come to Thomas and show Him compassion will be very kind to you here this morning as well. So 1 Peter 1.8, though you have not seen Him, you love Him.

Though you did not now see Him, you believe in Him. And it's not a joyless path. He says, and you rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Isn't that amazing? You can be in a relationship with the Savior this week in your life and be overflowing with all manner of joy even though you've never seen Him. That's the life of faith we're in. We want to have that expectation.

Lord, You're able to give me a joy and a peace and a trust in You. Where my life is not dictated by results. It's amazing in Matthew 7 that they boast in the results.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, do not cast out demons and do many mighty works in Your name. Don't have a wrong foundation. Will works prove the genuineness of our faith? Yeah, James 2 says that.

But we don't miss the great work of you being sanctified. We tend to think of fruit. Well, I've got to bear much fruit and so prove to be His disciple.

Yeah, one of the great ways you bear fruit is you're being conformed in the image of the Lord. Fruit isn't just, oh, I saw someone converted. Thank God you saw someone converted.

But it wasn't the one who sowed or the one who watered. God gave the growth. And so we want to be people of faith.

Trusting the Lord. We want this beatitude to be true of us. Are you trusting the Lord even if there's no fruit and no physical evidence that occasions and helps your trust? I get it.

I like an encouraging email or an encouraging conversion to happen. That encourages me. And that's not wrong.

But that cannot be the fuel and the basis by which you and I are keeping on in this walk. Because if the Lord in His sovereign providence has designed you to sow for 30 years and someone else is going to come along and get all the converts, it's not going to work if that's how you're thinking. And to just close with that thought again that Paul said.

Isn't it amazing what Paul said? Paul Washer, he's made the comment, maybe it's really his own weakness in faith by which God is giving results in order to encourage him that he not fall into despair. I mean, what a thought. He's admitting that in that sermon.

Because he knows there's truth there. So brethren, may the Lord help us to be those who trust the Lord and we rejoice when God saves, we rejoice when God does great things. But God forbid where Evan Roberts or Duncan Campbell or whoever in church history who saw revivals, who saw all manner of conversions, and then it stops and the joy goes away.

You can have joy inexpressible even if you haven't seen Him, even if you have no converts, because you have Christ and in Him is the hope of glory. Let's pray. Father, Lord, help this to be a reality.

Lord, it's too easy for me to even speak on these things. And Lord, it just not be true in my life. And so Lord, I pray You'd help it to be true.

Father, You know the ways that I've had wrong emphasis at times. And Lord, I've maybe put too much weight on some result or some thing to give some sort of affirmation. And Lord, I don't want to be some needy, insecure kid who's looking for all these affirmations from his father that You're with me.

Lord, I want to trust You even if I see nothing because I believe You. And Lord, if we believe You, we know we aren't going to ultimately see nothing at least in this area of personal sanctification. Lord, You're going to keep growing us.

You're going to keep showing us more and more of Your Word. And Lord, we do pray that You would save in our midst even today, Lord, that some who've not trusted You, some who are demanding a sign. Lord, I think of this one individual that Jeff and I have been counseling for months, and he's just demanding signs.

And he's got to have this. He's got to have that. Lord, I pray You'd save him that he would abandon, Lord, this atrocious, insulting garbage of having a feeling prior to coming and having faith.

Lord, You are worthy of us trusting You now even if we don't subjectively feel anything at all. And yet, Lord, yes, we thank You for the feelings and we thank You for the witness of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And Father, there's so much more we could say, we could think about even to balance all these things out.

But Lord, I trust You'll use this for Your people and that You will help us. So Lord, we just commit ourselves to You in Christ's name, Amen. Now, well, we'll dismiss, but maybe, Jenny, we could sing later by faith during the songs.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/r1ibQziAuGU.mp4>

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