

When Thomas Was At His Best

A. **The apostle** Thomas has been unfairly branded as a doubter of Jesus Christ.

1. I like the way one sister put it, “Thomas doubted so we could believe.” – Though Thomas didn’t remain in his doubt did he?
2. As we will see in this lesson, Thomas became a great man of faith in Christ, & a great apostle for the cause of Christ.

B. **But in** our previous lesson, we saw Thomas at his worst moment in life, & from that event we learned some valuable lessons, even as did he.

1. One thing we learned was that no one’s life is fairly defined by one event, we must look at the entire life of a person.

[Thomas had several great moments of faith, & sometimes in our haste to call him a doubter we overlook the great examples from the life of Thomas.

Let’s turn away from his moment of doubt to see what we can learn from Thomas when he was at his best.]

I. WE MUST BE COMMITTED TO CHRIST TO THE DEATH

A. **Backdrop** (John 10:22-31; 11:1-7):

1. Read (11:8-16): Application (15:13; Rev 2:10).

- a. Does “to the point of death” describe the degree of commitment we have?

B. **Thomas** was committed to the point of death, because he had committed ALL of his life.

1. The demand of apostleship (Mk 10:28).

2. The demand of discipleship (2 Cor 8:5).

a. Does “with all of my life” describe the degree of commitment we have?

II. GREAT SINS DON'T HAVE TO PREVENT US FROM BEING GREAT SERVANTS OF GOD

A. **Thomas** may have been the last of the 12 disciples to have doubts about Christ, but he was, as Paul would say about himself, “*not a whit behind the very chiefest (the most eminent) apostles*” (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11).

1. He was at the upper room prayer meeting with the eleven disciples (Acts 1:13).

2. He was present with 120 disciples to select a replacement for Judas Iscariot (1:15).

3. He was in one accord with the eleven on the day of Pentecost, where they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit & began to preach the gospel to the multitude (2:1, 7, 14).

4. He was put in prison with the apostles (5:18).

5. He was with the apostles in Jerusalem at the time of the great persecution that arose after the stoning of Stephen (8:1).

6. Thomas was a great servant of God, who did not allow his great past sin hamper his great future service.

B. **It's easy** to allow the shame we feel for our sins to keep us from working toward our full potential.

1. When that happens to you think of this: we can trace some sin to almost every man & woman of faith (Heb 11).

2. Paul offered the best advice, since he had a great reason to be ashamed ([Phil 3:13-14](#)).
3. Debilitating shame makes us unworthy of the kingdom ([Lk 9:62](#)).
 - a. He who forgets the cleansing of his sins is destined to repeat them ([2 Pet 1:5-9](#)).

III. AT OUR BEST WE ARE NOT ALONE

- A. [Last week](#) we learned that Thomas, when he was at his worst, was no different than the other apostles.
 1. We didn't make that point to justify his sin, but to show that all the apostles struggled with unbelief
 2. To think we are alone in our sins, will leave us demoralized & discouraged from taking on the roles we are capable of doing.

- B. [On the](#) other hand, just because Thomas had times of great faith does not mean that he was better or greater than others.
 1. Thomas still had his human failings; his sin of doubt was not likely his last sin.
 2. It might have been easy for Thomas to become prideful as his sin of doubt got pushed further back into his mind.
 3. Paul dealt with this attitude ([1 Cor 12:20-22](#)), to which he responded in chapter 13, by saying "*love does not parade itself, is not puffed up*".
- C. [So it](#) would do us all well to remember our failings, without dwelling on them.
 1. Lest we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to ([Rom 12:3](#); cf. [Gal 6:3](#)).

2. Such will help us immensely in trying to restore others when they sin (Gal 6:1).

3. And it will keep us humble enough to “*serve God acceptably with reverence & godly fear*” (Heb 12:28).

4. Like Thomas, when we are at our best, we are not alone in the Lord’s service.

3. He said, “Let **US** go, that **WE** may die with Him” (Jn 11:16).

B. The key to leadership is being a good example.

1. Leaders don’t push others ahead of them, nor do they pull others along.

2. Rather, they set the pattern, blaze the trail & encourage others to join them.

IV. THE LORD NEEDS LEADERS

A. In John 11, the apostles were afraid to go with Jesus until someone stepped out & took the lead.

1. All leaders, like Thomas, run the risk of criticism, but they are willing to lead in order to get people moving in the right direction.

2. Notice that Thomas didn’t put the burden on others; he didn’t wait for them to act first.

Rom 12:8 – he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; **he who leads, with diligence**; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

3. Leadership requires diligence, eagerness, earnestness.

a. Leadership cannot wait until later, until a more convenient time.

- b. Leaders work hard & often when duty calls.
- c. Laziness would prevent one from being an elder, deacon, teacher, & yes even a faithful Christian.

c. The best way to lead others in a good word is to actually do the work, & invite others to come along if they like– that was Thomas’s leadership style.

CLOSING

C. **Are there** things you would like to see this church do? Are there works that you would like every member involved in doing?

1. By looking at Thomas, what do you suppose is the best way to lead others in a good work?

- a. By complaining that the elders don’t care about the Lord’s work?
- b. By complaining that no one wants to help you reach the lost?

A. **Thomas** was a great servant.

- 1. Did he sin a great sin?
- 2. Yes, but he didn’t allow his sins to prevent him from reaching his potential.

B. **Thomas** was a great leader too.

- 1. Did he brow beat others into following him?
- 2. No, but he did what he knew His Lord wanted him to do, & he invited others to come along.