

Trusting Thomas

Joe Slater

Poor Thomas! He's singled out as the doubter even though savvy Bible students know the other disciples doubted too. Not that this excuses anything, mind you! I wonder, though, how many remember Thomas' willingness to follow Jesus even when he believed it meant imminent death.

Lazarus had died. The disciples misunderstood just about everything Jesus said about it. *"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up"* (John 11:11). They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was resting, which would help him recover from his sickness.

When Jesus clarified his words, the disciples still misunderstood. *"Lazarus died. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him"* (11:15-15). With 20-20 hindsight, we know Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. But Thomas (and probably the others) thought He meant to go to the realm of the dead, where Lazarus was. They knew Jesus intended to go to Judea where the Jews were planning to kill Him (see 11:7-8). If He returned there now, they might very well seize the opportunity to murder him.

Nevertheless, Thomas was willing to accompany Jesus on what appeared to him to be a suicide mission. *"Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him'"* (11:16).

I'd like to change his nickname from Doubting Thomas to Trusting Thomas. He manifested loyalty to Jesus even when he sincerely (albeit mistakenly) believed it meant his imminent death! We ought to remember that with admiration as easily as we remember his later doubt with dismay.

Defeated?

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:7-8).

Just up the road from my home lies a community called Defeated. This quaint community can be found just east of Nashville, not too far from another community called Difficult (no joke). The local school mascot in Defeated is the Braves. Recently, while traveling through the area, I noticed a flashing venue outside the school which read, "It's good to be a Defeated Brave."

To say the flashing sign was an eye catcher would be an understatement, for it certainly had its desired effect on me. The statement traveled through my mind in a continuous loop. A Defeated Brave? Defeated? Is it possible for a brave individual to ever truly be defeated? Various definitions and word plays came to mind as well as a mental image of an Indian Warrior. School and community pride were obvious, but the irony of the message prevailed that day. If given the choice, I would suggest "Never Defeated and Brave." It's far more fitting.

One writer suggests that being brave means "moving forward despite uncertainty." This certainly applies in everyday life, as no one knows the outcome of each day. It takes bravery to face the challenges of this uncertain age. But for those who choose to live for Lord Jesus, a certain future awaits - a future in which *"death has been abolished and life and immortality have been brought to light"* (2 Timothy 1:10). In addition, Paul discusses how believers replace uncertainty with confidence as they *"overwhelmingly conquer through Him"* (Romans 8:37). A believer is both victorious and undefeated! Amen and Amen!

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

Cast Off Your Coat

"And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus" (Mark 10:50).

How would you make a living if you were blind? Today there are many ways a blind person can earn money, but in the time of Bartimaeus, one could only sit by the roadside and endure the shame of begging. That's what blind Bartimaeus was doing when he heard that Jesus was coming his way.

Bartimaeus was desperate for help. He cried loudly, *"Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!"* Over and over his pleas sounded. He grew so loud and persistent that his voice probably made it hard for the people to hear Jesus' preaching. Many rebuked him and told him to shut up. But he kept yelling until Jesus called for him.

Then he did an amazing thing. In his eagerness, he sprang to his feet and cast off his outer garment. It kept him warm during cold days, and he used it for a blanket when he had to sleep on the street. But now, it was an impediment to his reaching Jesus quickly. It was a garment of shame that reminded him of his plight. He was willing to give it up for a most precious gift—meeting Jesus and receiving his sight.

Like blind Bartimaeus, we all have a coat that can be a hindrance to our Christian lives. Perhaps it is sin that brings shame and sorrow. Maybe it is trouble and sadness. It can be a lack of faith in God's power and willingness to help us. If you have such an impediment, now is the time to throw it off and believe in God's power to heal you and make you whole through Jesus Christ. When He calls for you, be like Bartimaeus and eagerly run to Him.

--Donna Wittlif (Ft. Worth, TX)