

# No Doubt

## 1 John 5:1-6

### Introduction

I've always had an affinity for the Apostle Thomas. Given that we share the same first name, you can probably understand why.

- Thomas. Good name. But at the same time, I have always been troubled by his nickname: "Doubting Thomas."

Like many of us, Thomas had a hard time believing something that he could not see – especially something that had never happened to him before. A resurrection is very unique after all.

- When Jesus made His appearance to 10 of the disciples on Easter evening, Thomas was absent. He missed it! But his colleagues eagerly recounted that event to him as soon as they could, but still ... in Thomas, there was that lingering doubt.

Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. (John 20:25)

I get it. I would have shared the skepticism had I been one of those first disciples. It took yet another appearance by Jesus the following Sunday, before Thomas eventually became convinced.

And once convinced, he became a powerful evangelistic voice for Christianity. He moved from doubt to total faith.

- By A.D. 52 he was spreading the Gospel in India and is to this day regarded as the father of Christianity in that nation.
- Prior to that he may have been one of the first Christians to carry the Gospel to China. There is some scant evidence that makes that connection.
- There are seven churches in India that claim to have been founded by Thomas and several families claim to have documentation that their ancestors were baptized by him.
- Eventually he was martyred there in A.D. 72 when a trial chief became angry with him because Thomas refused the chief's order to worship an idol. So the chief ordered his high priest to stab Thomas with a spear.
- You can visit his tomb at St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica. His relics are buried there.

He overcame his doubt to serve his Lord and Savior faithfully for almost 40 years before his martyrdom.

Today is the last of a four post-Easter sermon series that emphasizes the difference the risen Christ makes in the lives of those who believe in Him.

In this series I have described the image of a "ripple effect" present in the Epistle of 1 John, as seen in the author's use of the word:

## **NO!**

John presents a key teaching and follows it up with a “NO” statement. So we began this series with the teaching in...

- God is light, so in Him there is NO DARKNESS (1 John 1:5). God sees everything clearly.
- Jesus died for all our sins, so therefore there is NO CONDEMNATION for those who put their trust in Him (1 John 3:16). Our debt has been paid in full.
- And we've seen how God's love is greater than any sin that we commit. That love doesn't automatically mean that everyone goes to heaven, because we must appropriate that love in our own lives. But even if we refuse it, He still loves us.

Today we look at the truth conveyed in 1 John 5:4

Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)

Here is the NO statement from this text:

We can be overcomers that have NO DOUBT about our relationship with God once we place our faith in Him.

Thomas moved from doubter to overcomer, but in order for that to happen, Thomas needed proof.

Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. (John 20:25)

Perhaps John had Thomas in mind when he wrote these words. The entire 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 John is a series of statements for the Christian who needs “proof.” The five verses of our text provide us with two of those proofs – one in our heads and one in our hearts.

### **PROOF #1: YOUR HEAD**

Look at verse 1:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... (1 John 5:1)

This is the core belief of the Christian faith: that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. It is this question Jesus presented to His disciples when He asked:

“Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

The answer that Peter gave became the cornerstone of our faith:

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."  
(Matthew 16:16)

In a few moments you will be asked to stand and profess it within this community of faith, with the words of the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord... (Apostles' Creed)

Only Christians can profess this. Jews don't. Muslims won't. Atheists, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons... None of them will say anything remotely close to that about Jesus. To them he is little more than a Jewish prophet or a misguided carpenter's son. Only Christians will say: Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior of the World.

Here's the really amazing part: You can't say it either until God Himself starts working inside your head long enough that you yourself are convinced of it. When Peter answered the question correctly, Jesus made that clear:

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:17)

It was a dramatic moment when the disciples – including Thomas – gathered that second Sunday evening. No one knew if Jesus would reappear that night or not. But He did! Wow!

Jesus went to Thomas, showed him the nail prints in His hands and feet and said:

When he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." (John 20:27)

Thomas was convinced! NO MORE DOUBT. And he professed it right then and there:

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

When you know in your head that Jesus Christ is precisely who He claims to be, there is NO MORE DOUBT. And you are brought into a relationship with God unlike any other relationship you will ever have.

But wait ... there's more!

## **PROOF #2: YOUR HEART**

Look at verse 3:

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

John is insistent that when a person genuinely believes in Jesus Christ, it makes a difference in how they live. It moves from the head to the heart. You might remember in last week's sermon, John bluntly stated:

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. (1 John 4:20)

I unsuccessfully tried to find a quote this week. Not even Google was able to help! I don't know who said it, but since we are in a Lutheran Church, let's credit Martin Luther. And since I couldn't find the exact quote, here's my paraphrase of it:

If you claim to be a Christian, and your spouse can't see a difference, your kids can't see a difference, and even if your dog can't see a difference, you probably aren't.

John makes it clear that doing the things that please God become matters of the heart. We find ourselves filled with a desire to do whatever makes God happy. What used to be. He even goes so far to say:

And his commands are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

When I was in early high school, my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer, a disease that would eventually take her life.

- Before she got sick, one of my chores was to dry the dishes that my mom washed. I hated drying the dishes, and so I would "forget" as often as I could. And mom would quietly wash and dry.
- But after she got sick, something changed in me. Not only would I dry them, I would wash them too. And put them away. And I did it without complaining!

When Mom got sick, something happened in my head and it made a difference in my heart.

- That's what John says happens when we put our trust in Jesus.
- Those things that we used to consider "burdensome" we now do with joy... things like loving that scoundrel down the street.

There is an old church hymn that goes like this:

What a wonderful change in my heart has been wrought  
Since Jesus came into my heart  
There's a light in my soul for which long I had sought  
Since Jesus came into my heart  
*Refrain: Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart  
Floods of joy o'er my soul like the sea billow roll, since Jesus came into my heart.*

And as I see those changes – and as others see those changes – there is NO DOUBT about my relationship my God.

## **APPLICATION**

Our starting point said this:

Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)

As God works in our heads and our hearts, removing the doubt, the result we see is victory. We become overcomers. There is NO DOUBT left.

Amen.