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THE DOUBTER.

"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." John 20: 25.

Thomas had three characteristics that distinguished him. He was brave; he was loyal, but he was a doubter. Let's see how it sounds to say it like men usually do. "He was a doubter, although he was brave and loyal." Isn't that the way we commonly measure a man? We put his faults first. This looks so big we do not see his virtues. That was not Jesus' way. He found the best that was in a person, and cultivated it till it was the dominant trait. He made the crop out grow the weeds.

We love a brave man. That is if we know he is brave. In this case we might have let Thomas' doubting blind us to his bravery. It is not easy to be brave when there is real danger. Playing brave on the stage requires no great courage, because the actor knows the danger is not real. But when a man faces real danger without flinching, we call him brave. When Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him," he really expected to meet death. He was not saying that to make his companions think he was brave. He would have liked to get out of going. But if the Lord was going, he did not intend to let Him go by Himself.

Two men were out looking for a lion. When they found his track, one said, "Look, he is a big none. Look at the print of that foot." The other man took one look at the track and said, "Y-you g-go on and s-see where he went, and I'll g-go b-back and see where he came from."

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Some of the boys who courted death in the last war can tell us what it takes to be brave. One boy who completed fifty missions as pilot of a big bomber told me of an experience he had. One of his superior officers was at the controls on this trip. When the shells began exploding right in front of them he looked at the pilot. He was white as a sheet and shaking like a leaf in a wind. The boy slipped over by his side and took the controls out of his hands, then brought the ship in safely. He said the officer yielded the controls as meekly as a little child.

If you had called Thomas a brave man, he might have laughed at you. He would have told you he was far from being brave. Many a man who faced death on the sea, in the air and on land will tell you he was not brave. Most of them will admit they were badly frightened. Perhaps in a life and death struggle they forgot they were frightened for the moment. The excitement of a desperate struggle may drive away fear for the time. But a man who is truly brave seldom boasts of his bravery. He remembers too vividly the tingling sense of fear that coursed up and down his spine at the sight of blood or death.

It was loyalty that made Thomas bravely face death. What is loyalty? It is the rockbed of character itself. It is what makes human society tick. Without loyalty men would be but little better than the old bear, who goes off and lives by himself. He has no friends for whom he would give the best. He lives solely by and for himself. Men have loyalty. They have faith in each other. That is loyalty. A disloyal person is one of the lowest of the species. A lack of loyalty is treason.

But Thomas was a doubter. Doubting in the face of convincing evidence is a weakness. It is the men and women who dare to believe who lead the way. It was a man who dared to believe who discovered the principle of vaccination. When Edward Jenner heard that milk maids were often immune to small pox he did not scoff at the idea. He started trying to find the cause. It was a long weary road. A man with small faith would have given up. But Jenner was a man who believed this scourge of the race could be conquered. He did not give up for a few failures. A truth like that was worth waiting for. There were many doubters in his day. They laughed at his theory. But before he died the scourge of small pox was on its way out. It is said that Napoleon once released some English prisoners on the mention of Jenner's name. He had done too much for men to refuse him anything.

If Pierre and Marie Curie had been doubters radium would not have been discovered. It took a life time of toil and discouraging experiments to prove that this substance even existed. But the discovery was the forerunner of atomic fission itself. It was the faith of these two people that lead the way to a truth hidden from men for millions of years.

Can a man's weakness be turned to his advantage? Not if he is proud of it. It is astounding how proud some people are of the very thing that is ruining them. A man has a very high temper. He has missed many a promotion by losing his temper. He is still at the bottom after a life time of toil. But is he ashamed of his temper? No, he thinks it a credit to him. He clings to it like a drunkard to his bottle.

He thinks it marks him as a man of distinction. He would feel very much insulted if one told him that was the cause of his failure.

A boy is a bully. His pugnacious attitude makes him very unpopular. He is unliked by boys and girls. But is he ashamed of it? No, he thinks it is a mark of courage. He thinks he would be a coward if he tried to be friendly.

It is only when we learn that a weakness is a weakness that the weakness can be turned into strength. It we realize our failure and the cause of it, we can turn it to our advantage. Thomas was a doubter, but he was not proud of it. Once he was convinced he was wrong, he went all the way. Do you suppose any other follower believed in the Lord any more than <sup>Thomas</sup> Thomas did when he fell on his knees and cried, "My Lord and my God?" Men who have conquered a weakness are often distinguished for their strength in that particular trait.

It is said that Schwab rarely give a man up for bad. When he found a man who was a failure, he began looking for the best that was in him. When he found this he made the man see it too. When the man found the good that was latent in him and saw it growing, he soon became ashamed of his pet weakness.

We know that Jesus found good in people that others thought wholly bad. He cultivated the good till it outgrew the bad. He made the crop out grow the weeds.

A farmer fights weeds till he is exhausted. As fast as he cuts them down they come back. But the skilled agriculturist plants a crop that will smother the weeds and lets the good crop do his work for him. In the Black Belt of Alabama the farmers cannot grow corn for the Johnson grass. But they can plant oats on the ground and the oats outgrow the Johnson grass before the weather gets warm. The oats keep the grass smothered till the grain is harvested. Then the grass makes a fine crop of hay or pasture. Very few people are all bad. Let's find the good in people and the battle is half won.