

“Fully Convinced, Fully Committed”

- Mark 11:45-57

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“FULLY CONVINCED,
FULLY COMMITTED”
JLN 11:45-57

Mark 11:45-57 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief

priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." 49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 "nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. 54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples. 55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?" 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

In Luke 16 there is a story of a rich man who lived as he pleased for his lifetime, and when he died he then arrived at the place he had chosen during his life...*a place away from God and His kingdom.* Having finally understood the situation and what was at stake, he shouted across the “great divide” between him and those in the pre-resurrection way-station, saying to Abraham “...*I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him (the beggar) to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment. Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded (even) though one rise from the dead.’*”

I wonder if there were people in the crowd that day of Lazarus’ resurrection that had at one time or another declared something akin to the tired statement that says “if I were to see a miracle, then I would believe...” If those folks were there that day...*and if history tells us anything, you can bet they were,* they then had to either eat those words or acquiesce. We all tend to at least philosophically live under the premise of “seeing is believing.” Yet in truth, we often see quite clearly and yet still do not believe. Oh, maybe we do *intellectually,* but in practice we fail to move according to our verbal affirmations. And can we say we really believe something that fails to illicit an accompanying action?

John wrote late in his gospel concerning the post resurrection meeting between Jesus and the apostle Thomas. “*Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’*” (John 20:29) Certainly Jesus did a lot of stuff that would *or should have,* affectively taken away the blinders of man’s skepticism. Again John wrote that “...*truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*” (John 20:30-31)

The reasons for our disbelief is that in truth, we simply love our sin! The apostle Paul said in Romans 1:18-20 that all people have plenty of evidence of God as well as His sovereignty, power and presence. Yet according to Romans they “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Instead of living and serving Him, they spend their time and energy telling themselves that they are ok living outside of the express will of their Creator. Some will even invent myths, like evolution, to dodge the reality of God so that they can continue in their sin. They say they don’t believe in God, so I guess we are equal because I don’t believe in atheists. But the bottom line...the commonality in them all, is they fail to ever live out the belief that comes from seeing the truth. They want God and life abundant and life eternal, but they do not want to place Him first and live their lives for Him.

If any miracle should have resulted in every person present falling on his face and worshiping Jesus as God, it would have been the raising of Lazarus from the dead. After all, Lazarus had been dead already for four days, yet when Jesus cried out (11:43), “*Lazarus, come forth,*” Lazarus stepped out of the grave, still wrapped in grave clothes. Our text tells us that many **did** believe in Jesus because of that event, but in a typical display of the hardness of people’s hearts, others went to report to the Jewish leaders what had happened. And then the religious “powers-that-be,” instead of admitting their foolishness and surrendering to the reality of Jesus, only responded by notching up their efforts to kill Him.

Today that game continues. There always will be those who will try to head you off in your spiritual journey. They will tell you that you are being ridiculous. Or that you need not be so consumed and so involved. That a little church in a person’s life is nice and ok, but you don’t have to be crazy about it. They will tell you that that church you are going to is a cult...(the “F-word” of the religious elitists). They will make up fake social media names and attempt to smear the church in online reviews. Apparently they fail to remember God’s words saying that “*the gates of hell will not prevail against us.*”

Jesus told Martha in 11:40 that if she believed, she would “see the glory of God.” It is a painful thing to watch the angst of those who have chosen to never see such, for I can’t imagine having lived without such a view. John said in his gospel, chapter 1 verse 14 that “...*the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” The great John Calvin once wrote “The glory of God is when we know what He is.” He went on to say “We never truly glory in Him until we have utterly discarded our own glory ... whoso glories in himself glories against God.”

Jesus once said...back in John 5:21, “*For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.*” He said “*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; ...*” What that means is that He will make good on His promise to raise all the dead someday, either for eternal life or for judgment. And to show everyone that His word was good, He brought Lazarus back.

Moses said back in Exodus 33:18 “*I pray You, show me Your glory!*” What a thing to say! Moses had already seen the Lord at the burning bush. He had seen God’s power in the ten plagues on Egypt. He had seen the Lord deliver His people through the Red Sea, provide water from the rock, and manna from heaven every morning. Even after all of that He still wanted more. Have **you** had your fill believer? Because I haven’t!

Certainly mankind has freewill. Each of us must *choose* to believe. But such a choice will never be made for Christ unless God raises **us** from the dead! Perhaps you are present here today trying to intellectually be convinced that Jesus is who He said He was and all He said was fact. Or maybe you are here and you know He is fact but you reject His lordship. John 1:12-13 we read, “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*” Apparently...if we are to accept that passage, there are those that “believe” that have yet to be transformed... have yet to truly born again. Those that “*received Him*” He “*gave the right to become children of God.*” He also “gave” that right to “*even those who believe.*” God must do *His* work, beyond our intellectual “belief.”

John recorded this account of Lazarus so that we would not only “believe” *of* Christ, but believe *in* Him. And by doing so we are given that gift of salvation and eternal life. Of course immediately there are those who seek to refute this account before us, and they do so with any and every reason they can find to throw at it. Some will point out that only John covered this story, and thus make the event suspect. In his book, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, Richard Bauckham reasoned that the other gospel writers did not record this story in order to protect Lazarus’s life. Although oral tradition passed it on, it could not be safely written down, even anonymously. Because of such, Mark, the earliest Gospel, omits it entirely. Depending on Mark for most of their narrative material, Matthew and Luke also left this story out of their gospels. But John wrote independently of the others in the later part of the first century, and at that point Lazarus would no longer be alive, and all the temple priests would have been completely wiped out by the Romans. So for John, this great sign pointing to Jesus’s own resurrection could be then safely be written.

Paul says that if this account is a lie, and resurrection from the dead does not occur, then our faith is worthless (1 Cor. 15:1-19). He says there that if there is no resurrection, and this life is all there is, then “...*we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.*” 1Corinthians 15:16-17 says “*For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*” But the reading of the account of Lazarus is clear. John is telling us of an event that he actually saw take place. Even Jesus’ enemies acknowledged that He was doing many miracles (11:47), and they did not deny that Lazarus had been dead and now was alive.

It seems so often that any attempt to clarify what scripture means by “believing” is met with a brisling self-righteous obstinates. Yet even Romans 10:9 seeks to elaborate as to what “believing” truly means. “...*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*” Jesus also said in Matthew 10:32 “*Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*” Then there is Philippians 2:11 “...*and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” and 1John 4:2 “*By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God...*”

In every instance of secular life, when we say we “believe *in*” something or someone, it has an effect upon our lives and living. Reality is altered by such a “belief.” Yet when it comes to Christ, all such sense goes out the window as we want to think that “saving belief” is merely an admonition that Jesus existed and maybe even that He is the Son of God and our only redeemer. But if I believe *IN* the United States, that means more than just that such a country exists, or if I believe *IN* my doctor it means more than just that He is a physician living down the street. If I “believe *IN* my car” I am saying more than just that my car is a reality. It means that when I drive my car I trust it to start, run, and get me where I need to go in once piece.

Now apply this logic to Christ. If you have come to a belief *IN* Christ, that’s where you begin a relationship with Him. That’s when you move from spiritual death to eternal life. But if you do not believe in Jesus as more than a historical figure or even as your Savior from death, you are still under God’s wrath. “*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*” (3:36). That passage commands you to believe *in* Jesus and believe all that He said. If you do not, you do not really believe *IN* Him and you are still lost in your sin. When one believes *IN* Christ, He or she doesn’t just stop with that initial belief. Because Jesus transforms people. He makes you into a new person with new priorities and new passions. Your faith in Christ will grow by innate design and it will keep growing as you see more and more of who He is.

This miracle before us shows that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. He is, as He told Martha (11:25), “*the resurrection and the life.*” He is the eternal Son of God who took on human flesh and laid down His life willingly on the cross so that whoever believes in Him has eternal life and has it as a new creature. Such

a metamorphosis makes us fully convinced and fully committed. And *that* has a very real and radical effect upon all we do and all that we live. It moves us, it changes us, it shapes our destiny and decisions.

The miracle of Lazarus shows that Jesus can do what men cannot do. Religion could not and cannot raise the dead. All that the Jews could do was offer solace to Mary and Martha. The scribes and Pharisees could not raise the dead. Even modern medicine, with all of its advanced knowledge, cannot raise to life a body that has died. But Jesus could do what no mere man could do. He spoke the word and Lazarus literally came to life. Jesus made life where there was none.

All of this shows our insufficiency and Christ's all-sufficiency. One reason that we don't want to trust Christ with our lives is that we already feel sufficient or adequate in ourselves. We may ask Him for a little help now and then, but we don't acknowledge what He told the disciples (15:5), "*apart from Me you can do nothing.*" When we realize our own insufficiency and helplessness, then we in humility cast ourselves on the Lord. As the famous missionary Hudson Taylor once said, "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them." Our pride keeps us from such a surrender, and our love of sin keeps us there.

Scripture tells us that "*unless a man be born again, he will not see the kingdom of God.*" Unless a man is *reborn*. We too must experience spiritually what Lazarus did physically. We have to die. We have to be reborn.

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. Romans 6: 6-14 "*For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, **give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life.** So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.*"

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We must realize that like many of those present that day, seeing a miracle without life changing belief just results in further hardening of heart. Many folks that were present that day were no doubt "good church-goers," who went through the outward rituals, but they weren't willing to completely give themselves over to Christ. This account before us is certainly a case study in the frightening nature of unbelief. What more are you seeking today? What more do you need to believe in Christ as Savior Redeemer? What more do you actually need to allow Him Lordship of your life? What further proof of God's power could you want than to see the miraculous in scripture, the world at large, and around you here in this fellowship? The dead have come back alive, and nothing the world has to offer could do such a thing short of intervention of deity. Yet, some who have indeed witnessed this spectacle have went away to speak against such glory. And some still sit here amongst us today.

A true heart of unbelief seeks its own way while it leaves God out. And in the end, He will leave you out. Hebrews 3:12 says "*Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.*" The Jewish leaders asked in 11:47, "What are we going to do about this Jesus?" They had 3 options: (1) Oppose Him; (2) be neutral toward Him as you practice your religion; (3) believe in Him as Savior and Lord, no matter the cost. If you believe, you will see the glory of God in Christ. But if you see the hand of God and do not believe, you'll be slowly hardened in your sin and you will be lost.