

# The Courage of Despair

*Then Thomas (also known as Didymus ) said to the rest of the disciples,  
"Let us also go, that we may die with him."  
John 11:16 (NIV)*

Every pastor will assure you that in the various congregations he or she has served, there have been some anxious souls who have had a hard time rejoicing in their faith. Doubts plague them and rob them of their joy in Christ.

Such a person was Thomas — one of the twelve apostles. Every mention of Thomas is in the Gospel of John, and in the context of him being puzzled, depressed or doubting concerning the situation he is in.

Thomas is bluntly honest in his doubts and despair, and likely voices the confusion of some of the other apostles when he speaks gloom. We give him full marks for speaking up and stating his confusion and concern in the situations we read. Yet there is a note of sadness in the fact his joy in Christ is dulled by his determination to always look on the dark side of life.

In the first of our encoun-

ters with Thomas we read of the Lord's determination to return to Judea where the Jewish leaders had recently sought to kill Him. Of course, this horrified the Twelve Apostles and Judas is the one who speaks up when Jesus insists they return to where the Lord's life had recently been threatened.

We hear Thomas's doubts and pessimism in the verse for today. But what we also hear, at this time, is his apparent willingness to die with Jesus. I call it the courage of despair.

We know that in a few weeks time, when push turns to shove in Gethsemane, Thomas's faith truly falters and he forsakes Jesus and flees into the darkness — as fast as the rest — from the side of his beloved Master.

Perhaps you have a personality like Thomas, always seeing the dark side of life, or possibly the present problem has torn down your fine, joyful faith in the

Lord. You may feel bankrupt and altogether too tired in the daily battle.

You may wonder where your former enthusiasm for Jesus has gone. You may even doubt that you are converted to faith in Christ.

Do not give up at such a dark moment. Always see that the best of disciples are disciples at best. All truly honest followers of Christ admit to times of doubt and despair.

See the tender scene of our Lord with doubting Thomas in John 20:26-29 and receive fresh encouragement. Ask the Resurrected One to visit you in your dilemma and minister grace as He did to doubting Thomas. He is ever the same and loves to make Himself known to the anxious doubter.

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