

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

# The Difference Between Imperfect & True Faith

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John 11:17-44

<sup>1</sup> Let's look at the difference between imperfect and true faith from this passage in the Gospel of John, chapter 11, verses 17 through 44. <sup>2</sup>

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." <sup>1</sup> <sup>3</sup>

Then Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." <sup>2</sup> <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John 11:17-22.

<sup>2</sup> John 11:23-27.

And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

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When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept.

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<sup>3</sup> John 11:28-31.



Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” <sup>4</sup> <sub>6</sub>

And Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” <sup>5</sup> <sub>7</sub>

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with

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<sup>4</sup> John 11:32-37.

<sup>5</sup> John 11:38-40.

**strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” <sup>6</sup>**

**We can learn several lessons from this passage.**

**For memorial services, it is the power of Lord Jesus to raise the dead. For Thanksgiving, it could be used to show the attitudes between Mary and Martha. <sup>8</sup>**

**The message I have for you today is to help your faith grow. Let’s examine the difference between imperfect and the true faith God’s wants for you. <sup>9</sup>**

**First let’s see how . . .**

## **I. Imperfect Faith is Expressed**

**Imperfect faith is expressed. <sup>10</sup>**

**Notice verse 16, Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.**

**Here, the faith of Thomas was expressed. <sup>11</sup> But it was a faith in Jesus as a human master. He loved the Lord,**

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<sup>6</sup> John 11:41-44.

and he was willing to die with the Lord. <sup>12</sup> But he really didn't understand who Jesus really was until after the resurrection in the upper room! <sup>13</sup>

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "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 it." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then 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." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>7</sup> <sup>14</sup>

Now, notice verse 32. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and

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<sup>7</sup> John 20:24-28.



said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

**The faith of Mary was expressed.** <sup>15</sup> But it was a faith in Jesus as an unfaithful friend Who could have helped – but didn’t! <sup>16</sup> She had been the one who was so devoted to His teachings. <sup>8</sup> She felt like He had let her down! <sup>17</sup>

Next, we see verse 20, **When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him . . .**

Then, **the faith of Martha was expressed.** <sup>18</sup> During her conversation with the Lord she even proclaimed the Good Confession! “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” <sup>9</sup> <sup>19</sup> This echoes the Good Confession Peter proclaimed earlier when Jesus confronted him, “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 10:38-42.

<sup>9</sup> John 11:26-27.

are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>10</sup> <sup>20</sup> But her faith didn’t understand the implications of what she had just said! <sup>21</sup> Verse 39 indicates that she was not expecting a resurrection!<sup>11</sup> <sup>22</sup>

Now, let’s see how . . .

## II. True Faith is Revealed

True faith is Revealed. <sup>23</sup>

See verses 33 through 35, When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept.

Lord Jesus shows us here that He has **empathy** for our feelings! <sup>24</sup> He cried in disappointment. These precious ladies thought He had been unfaithful to them. <sup>25</sup> But He also cried in sorrow because His friends were in sorrow! <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 16:15-16.

<sup>11</sup> John 11:39 - But, Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days!



Verses 41 and 42, **So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”**

Lord Jesus shows us He has **a desire** to help us! <sup>27</sup> He wanted to relieve the sorrow from the ones who trusted in Him. <sup>28</sup> But the purpose of this event was to bring glory to the Heavenly Father! <sup>29</sup>

Now, verses 43 and 44, **When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.**

Lord Jesus shows us that He has **the power** to help us! <sup>30</sup>

Notice, in the Bible, that each resurrection the Lord performed revealed Him more progressively! <sup>31</sup> Jairus’ daughter was raised right away. <sup>12</sup> <sup>32</sup> The widow of

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<sup>12</sup> Mark 5:21-43.

Nain's son was raised after a few hours.<sup>13</sup><sub>33</sub> Lazarus was raised after four days!<sup>14</sup><sub>34</sub> Then – The Lord resurrects Himself!<sub>35</sub>

Lord Jesus has boldly stated that **He has the same power over the spiritual realm that He had over the physical one!**

In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 2, the Lord says to a paralytic man, **Your sins are forgiven.**<sup>15</sup> His critics respond that Jesus is blaspheming because only God can forgive sins.<sup>16</sup> Then, the Lord responds in Mark, chapter 12, verses 9 through 11, **Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....** He said to the paralytic, **"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."**<sub>36</sub>

**So – what was . . .**

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<sup>13</sup> Luke 7:11-17.

<sup>14</sup> John 11:39 - . . . by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 12:5.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 12:7.

### III. The Result of the Revelation

The result of the revelation. <sup>37</sup>

Verse 45 tells us that **some believed**. <sup>17</sup> <sup>38</sup> They accepted the evidence that Jesus was the One who He claimed to be – God in flesh! <sup>39</sup> Biblical faith always involves commitment. You must trust yourself to the One who saved you. <sup>40</sup>

But – verse 46 tells us that **some rejected Him**. <sup>18</sup> Regardless of the evidence, some are going to reject Jesus! <sup>41</sup> This is often because of selfish motives. John, chapter 12, verses 42 and 43, **Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God**. <sup>42</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> John 11:45 - Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

<sup>18</sup> John 11:46 - But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.



**As the Lord's witnesses you will never convince everyone you contact. <sup>43</sup> But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try!**

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