

## HAVE CONFIDENCE IN JESUS

*16 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, in order that they might come and anoint his body. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they came to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>Now they were saying among themselves, Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb for us? <sup>4</sup>But looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was extremely large. <sup>5</sup>Upon entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>He said to them, Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He is risen; he is not here. Look, see the place where they laid him! <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples—and Peter—that he will go before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, just as he told you. <sup>8</sup>Then they went out and fled from the tomb; for they were overcome with trembling and astonishment. But they said nothing to any one, because they were afraid. (Mk. 16:1-8)*

### **Introduction**

A mother received a phone call from her eighteen-year-old daughter. The daughter was over four thousand miles away on a summer ministry in Europe with a young peoples' group from her church. The daughter had called to inform her mother that she was in England and, because everyone else was busy, she was going to tour the city of London all by herself. The daughter was confident; the mother was apprehensive. As their conversation ended she once again cautioned her daughter to be careful. Throughout the night and into the next day the mother is anxious. She repeatedly prays for her daughter's safety.

That night there comes another call from England. It's her daughter, and she is very excited. The young lady proceeds to describe for her mother the events of her day in London. She found herself in the midst of the hustle and bustle of Trafalgar Square. She paused to rest on a park bench, wishing she had a companion. Just about this time a stranger from the crowd—a girl about her age—sat down beside her. After engaging in conversation, they decided to spend the afternoon together. As they walk along, what should they discover but that they both were serving with the same Christian mission: the one had been working in Sweden, and was now assigned to northern England; the other had been working in Germany, and she, too, was assigned to northern England.

"God still does miracles, doesn't He!" exclaimed the daughter.

"Yes He does," replied her mother. "I suppose God looked down on Trafalgar Square and said, "There is a girl who needs a friend; let me remind her how big I really am."

After hanging up the phone, the mother reflected on these things: she became convinced that it was really she who needed the reminder of how big God really is (*POWER*, 6/24/90.)

In this present passage of Scripture we meet some other ladies who also needed to be reminded of how big God really is, and that He is fully able to keep all His promises. Like these ladies whom we meet in the sixteenth chapter of Mark, we often forget the promises of the Lord Jesus, and the power of God to fulfill those promises. Christian, let us have confidence in Jesus, because He is worthy of our complete trust.

## **I. Have Confidence in Jesus, Because He is Faithful to Keep His Word**

On that first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, did not go to the tomb to greet the risen Jesus, they went to anoint His dead corpse. They had seen the place where Joseph and Nicodemus had buried Jesus. Now, as soon as the Sabbath was over, they purchased spices and depart for the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus.

As they made their way to the tomb, their great concern was the huge stone that had been rolled over the entranceway: Who would remove the stone for them? But when they arrived at the tomb, they discovered that the stone had already been moved!

Upon entering the tomb, they encountered two young men (according to Luke 24:4) dressed in dazzling white robes, and the women were greatly alarmed.

One of these angels now addressed the women. He began by first calming their fears: *“Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified”* (Matt. 28:5.) Then he mildly rebukes them by asking incredulously, *“Why do you seek the living One among the dead?”* (Lk. 24:5.) He now informs them that Jesus has risen from the dead.

The angel reminds the women of how Jesus had assured His disciples that He would meet them in Galilee, as He had promised: *“You will all fall away, Jesus told them ... But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee”* (Mk. 14:27-28.) He also reminds them of how the Lord Jesus had foretold His trial, His crucifixion, and His resurrection:

*Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.* (Lk. 24:6-7)

Let us have confidence in Jesus, because He is faithful to keep His word. Let us be assured that He is the Lord and Conqueror of death:

*Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup>I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.* (Rev. 1:17b-18)

Let us be assured that He is with us and will watch over us:

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— <sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup>I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (Jn. 14:16-18)*

*... the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength ... And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me out of every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Tim. 4:17-18)*

Let us be assured that, as believers, He has brought us into the household of God His Father; note that in referring to His disciples, our Lord identifies to them (and us) as his *“brethren”* (Matt. 28:10):

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ; if we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom. 8:16-17)*

Let us be assured that He desires to have communion and fellowship with us; in Matthew 28:10 Jesus Himself reiterates the instructions of the angels recorded in verse 7 of Mark 16, *“Do not be afraid. Go, tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they shall see me.”*

*Do not let your hearts be troubled; trust in God, trust also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back, and take you to be with me; so that where I am, you may be also. (Jn. 14:1-3)*

## **II. Have Confidence in Jesus, Despite the Apparent Obstacles to Your Faith**

Indeed, Jesus had foretold all that was about to occur (His betrayal, His trial, His crucifixion, and His resurrection) while He and His disciples were still in Galilee—far removed from the events. But the very events He foretold now posed as obstacles to their faith and caused the disciples to forget the words and promises of the Lord Jesus.

In times of trial, we, too, tend to forget or lose sight of the promises of our Lord. By way of example: A Christian man tells of traveling with his family through a torrential downpour, listening to his children's recorder playing the Scripture song, “I will trust in Him and not be afraid.” That father writes,

It is one thing to hear those words in the sunshine, but it is easy to forget them in the midst of the storm. Had the recorder not been playing, would I

have remembered to “trust Him and not be afraid?” or would the storm have so dominated my attention that it posed a threat to my faith and caused me to forget the promises of the Lord?

The playing of the recorder, like the angels’ testimony to the women at the empty tomb, served to remind that father of the promises of the Lord, preventing him from forgetting them and becoming overwhelmed by the obstacles that presently confronted him.

The Bible testifies of Christian people encountering all kinds of apparently insurmountable obstacles to their faith. Abram and Sarah were promised a son; but they were confronted with their own advanced age and the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. Joseph was promised a position of honor and glory; but he was confronted with his present condition of slavery and imprisonment in the land of Egypt. The Israelites were promised deliverance from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land of Canaan; but they were confronted with the wide expanse of the Red Sea. The women and the disciples were promised a Savior; but they were confronted with the crucifixion, a dead corpse, and a sealed tomb. All these people of God were confronted with great obstacles to their faith, but in every instance the LORD proved Himself greater than the obstacles. He proved Himself ready and able to fulfill all that He had promised.

As Christians, even when we are confronted with obstacles to our faith—and especially then—may we have confidence in the Lord; may we imitate and practice the faith of Abraham:

*[Despite all the obstacles standing] against hope, [Abraham] believed with hope, so that he might become a father of many nations, just as it had been promised [to him], “So shall your offspring be.”<sup>19</sup> And without becoming weak in faith, he acknowledged that his own body was now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and [he acknowledged] the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, looking to the promise of God, he did not waver through unbelief, but grew strong through faith, [thereby] giving glory to God,<sup>21</sup> being fully persuaded that what [God] had promised, he was also able to fulfill. (Rom. 4:18-21)*

Let us have confidence in Jesus, no matter what the apparent obstacle may be.

The obstacle at times may be spiritual in nature; perhaps a strong, even overwhelming, sense of sin, note Peter’s reaction after he had denied his Lord, *“Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.’ And he broke down and wept”* (Mk. 14:72.) But consider the special word the angel has for Peter following our Lord’s resurrection: *“But go, tell his disciples **and Peter**, He is going ahead of you to Galilee: there you shall see him, just as he told you”* (Mk. 16:7.) Note, also, Luke 24:34, *“The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon [i.e.; Peter].”* The Apostle

John assures us, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 Jn. 1:9.) As the Apostle Paul reveals, God can forgive our sins and still maintain His divine justice because of Calvary: *"God presented [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement ... <sup>26</sup>he did it to demonstrate his justice ... so as to be just and the one how justifies the man who has faith in Jesus"* (Rom. 3:24,26.)

Some times the obstacles may be intellectual in nature: the women wondered who would move the stone from the mouth of the tomb; and they could not even conceive of the resurrection at this point. But consider the Apostle Paul's testimony before the Roman authorities: *"Why is it judged to be incredible by you, if God raises the dead?"* (Acts 26:8.) Let us also take confidence from the prayer of the prophet Jeremiah: *"Ah Lord Jehovah! You have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for you"* (Jer. 32:17.) Whenever we are confronted with obstacles of an intellectual, or scientific nature, let us bear in mind the following truths. First, science itself is possible only because God is a God of order who has brought into being a creation that is under His control and has been fashioned by His mind and hand. Second, it is God Himself who commands our study of and righteous dominion over His creation: *"fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"* (Gen. 1:28.) Third, the theories of science that are in accordance with truth shall be established, those that are not shall ultimately fail—for God's truth shall endure: *"The lip of truth shall be established forever; but a lying tongue lasts only for a moment"* (Prov. 12:19.)

Still at other times, the obstacles we encounter may be moral in nature. When they are questions relating to God's goodness, consider such a passage as Matthew 5:45, *"your Father in heaven ... causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."* May we bear in mind that the ultimate expression of God's love is to be seen at the cross of Calvary: *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (Jn. 3:16.) When the moral questions relate to God's justice, consider the Apostle Paul's testimony made before the Athenians: *"[God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31.) Paul points out that the resurrection of the one truly righteous man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the proof that God is righteous and that He shall finally cause His righteousness to prevail over all the world.

Finally, there are times when the obstacles we face may be of a personal nature. When they pertain to financial needs, bear in mind the Apostle Paul's assurance given to the Philippian church: *"my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:19.) When they pertain to the future, bear in mind the LORD's great promise made through the prophet Jeremiah: *"I know the plans I have for you, declares Jehovah, plans to make you proper and not to*

*harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11.) When those obstacles pertain to the hour of our own death, may we as Christians take comfort from the sure testimony of the Psalmist: “The LORD is my shepherd ... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psl. 23:1,4.)*

Let us have confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what obstacles may confront us.

*You will light my lamp. Jehovah my God will lighten my darkness. <sup>29</sup>By you I advance against a troop; and by my God do I leap over a wall. (Psl. 18:28-29)*

## **Conclusion**

Just like those women who came to the tomb, we, too, tend to forget the promises of our Lord and the power of God to fulfill those promises. Because our Lord Jesus Christ is able and faithful to keep all His promises, let us place our confidence in Him. May God help us to do so all the days of our lives and in all the changing circumstances of life.