



DEVOTIONAL FOR MATTHEW 28; MARK 16; LUKE 24; JOHN 20-21

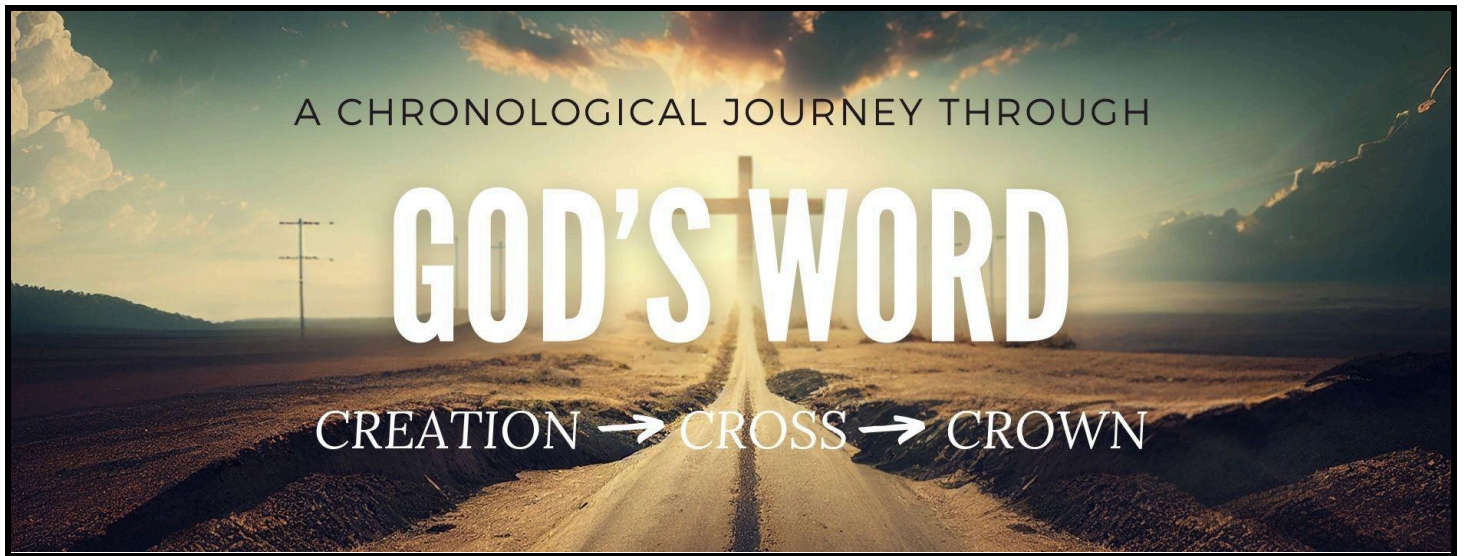
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For anyone who knows me, they know I struggle with control. Control is derived from fear and distrust, or better said as a lack of faith. Any time things are not in my control (things are never truly in my control) or seem not so certain, I start to get fearful and scared. I worry constantly and will tear myself up trying to manipulate the issue or scenario into something I can make sure will go the way I want, or think I want it. Fear is a major feeling that can make any person do the most outrageous of things. Fear, being a feeling that is very real, is not reliable. (I've been told this many times and still struggle.) What is reliable is God and His word. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This good is to make me more like Christ (Romans 8:29).

Reading through each gospel account of the resurrection, I noticed most of what is written is the same or has very close similarities. In each, the one who investigated the empty tomb left afraid and astonished all at once (Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:12). Some even questioned what was right in front of them, the words that were spoken to them from Jesus himself (Luke 24:25). "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:18-19). All these things being out of their control created fear and doubt in the "what if's" and "how?" Even when face to face with Jesus they doubted and did not believe until they touched the wounds on his hands and feet (John 20:25).

The most important and most awaited prophecy comes to pass and no one notices its worth or occurrence because of fear and doubt. The most precious gift given was almost completely passed up and not accepted because it was not seen with their own eyes. How many times have I myself missed the mark and the most obvious of answers from the One I have prayed to because it was out of my own disbelief or doubt? Peter, the one who took a step of faith to walk on the water only to sink because of his lack of faith is the one who without hesitation jumps out of another boat to swim to shore when he realizes it is Jesus who is there (John 21:7). This is the same Peter who, after denying Christ three times, was restored to leadership by Jesus in John 21:15-17.

Even the most devoted of followers miss the mark and let doubt take over in fear. It's what we do in those moments that matters most. I try to lean on God's word when I start having those feelings of fear. This verse has been helpful for me: "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).



Questions:

1. What do you find yourself doubting the most?
2. Do you let your fear run your life and make decisions based on it?
3. What verse(s) do you turn to in times of fear or doubt?