

A Risen Saviour.

Luke 24.

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The period during which our blessed Lord lay in the tomb must needs have proved a dark and bewildering moment to many of those who looked for redemption in Israel. It would demand a calm, clear and vigorous faith to raise the heart above the heavy clouds which gathered just then upon the horizon of God's people, and it does not appear that many possessed such a faith at that trying moment.

We may doubtless look upon the two disciples who travelled together to Emmaus as illustrating the condition of many, if not all, the beloved saints of God during the three days and three nights that our beloved Lord lay in the heart of the earth. They were thoroughly bewildered and at their wits' end. "They talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."

Their minds were full of surrounding circumstances. All hope seemed gone. Their fondly cherished expectations were blasted, apparently. The whole scene was overcast by the dark shadow of death, and their poor hearts were sad.

But mark how the risen Saviour's challenge falls upon their drooping spirits! "And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

Surely this was a reasonable and weighty question for those dear disciples — a question eminently calculated to recall them, as we say, to their senses. It was precisely what they wanted at the moment, occupied as they were with circumstances instead of resting in the eternal and immutable truth of God. Scripture was clear and plain enough had they only hearkened to its voice. But instead of listening only to the distinct testimony of the eternal Spirit in the Word they had allowed their minds to get thoroughly down under the action and influences of outward circumstances. Instead of standing with firm foot on the everlasting rock of divine revelation, they were struggling amid the billows of life's stormy ocean. In a word, they had for a moment fallen under the power of death so far as their minds were concerned, and no marvel if their hearts were sad and their communications gloomy.

And does it not sometimes happen that you and I in like manner get down under the power of things seen and temporal, instead of living by faith in the light of things unseen and eternal? Yes, even we who profess to know and believe in a risen Saviour — who believe that we are dead and risen with Him — who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, do not we at times sink and cower? And do we not at such moments stand in need of a risen Saviour's challenge? Has not that precious, loving Saviour oftentimes occasion to put the question to our hearts, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another?" Does it not often happen that when we come together or when we walk by the way our "communications" are anything but what they ought to be? It may be gloomily moping together over the depressing circumstances which surround us — the weather — the prospects of the country — the state of trade — our poor health — the difficulty of making both ends meet — anything and everything, in short, but the right thing.

Yes, and so occupied do we become with such things that our spiritual eyes are holden, and we do not take knowledge of the blessed One who in His tender faithful love is at our side, and He has to challenge our vagrant hearts with His pointed and powerful question, "What manner of

communications are these that ye have?"

Let us think of this. It really demands our consideration. We are all far too apt to allow our minds to fall under the power and pressure of circumstances, instead of living in the power of faith. We get occupied with our surroundings instead of dwelling upon things above" — those bright and blessed realities which are ours in Christ.

And what is the result? Do we better our circumstances or brighten our prospects by gloomily moping over them? Not in the smallest degree. What then? We simply make ourselves miserable and our communications depressing; and, worst of all, we bring dishonour on the cause of Christ.

Christians forget how much is involved in their temper, manner, look, and deportment in daily life. We forget that the Lord's glory is intimately bound up with our daily deportments. We all know that, in social life, we judge of the character of the head of a household by what we see of his children and servants. If we observed the children looking miserable and downcast, we should be disposed to pronounce their father morose, severe and arbitrary. If we see the servants crushed and overwrought, we consider the master hard-hearted and grinding. In short, as a rule, you can form a tolerably fair estimate of the head of a house by the tone, spirit, style and manner of the members of his household.

How earnestly, then, should we seek, as members of the household of *God*, to give a right impression of what He is by our temper, spirit, style, and manner! If men of the world — those with whom we come in contact from day to day in the practical details of life — if they see us looking sour, morose downcast — if they hear us giving utterance to doleful complaints about this, that and the other — if they see us occupied about our own things — grasping, griping, and driving as hard bargains as others — if they see us grinding our servants with heavy Work, low wages, and poor fare — what estimate can they form of Him whom we call our Father and our Master in heaven?

Let us not despise and turn away from such homely words. Depend upon it there is need of such in this day of much profession. There is a vast amount of intellectual traffic in truth which leaves the conscience unreached, the heart untouched, the life unaffected. We know we are dead and risen; but when anything occurs to touch us, either in our persons, in our relations, or in our interests, we speedily show how little power that precious truth has upon us.

May the Lord give us grace to apply our hearts very seriously and earnestly to these things, so that there may be, in our daily course, a more faithful exhibition of a genuine Christianity — such an exhibition as shall glorify our own most gracious God and Father, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ — and such, too, as shall afford to those who come in contact with us a fair specimen of what pure religion really is in its action upon the entire course and character.

May we all realize more a risen Saviour's presence, and find therein a triumphant answer to all the dark suggestions of the enemy, the depressing reasonings of our own hearts, and the deadening influence of surrounding circumstances. God, in His infinite mercy, grant it, for Jesus' sake.

It is impossible to read this charming section of inspiration (Luke 24) and not be struck with what we may venture to call the rallying power of a risen Saviour's voice and presence. We see the dear disciples scattered hither and thither in doubt and perplexity, fear and despondency — some running to the sepulchre; some coming from it; some going to Emmaus, and some crowded together at Jerusalem, in various states and conditions.

But the voice and realized presence of Jesus rallied, reassured, and encouraged them all, and brought all together around His own blessed Person in worship, love, and praise. There was an indescribable power in His presence to meet every condition of heart and mind. Thus it was; thus it is;

thus it ever must be, blessed and praised be His precious name! There is power in the presence of a risen Saviour to solve our difficulties, remove our perplexities, calm our fears, ease our burdens, dry our tears, meet our every need, tranquillise our minds and satisfy every craving of our hearts.

Jesus! Thou art enough,
The mind and heart to fill;
Thy life — to calm the anxious soul
Thy love — its fear dispel.

The two disciples going to Emmaus proved something of this, if we are to judge from their own glowing words to one another. "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Yes, here lay the deep and precious secret: "*He* talked with us" — and "*He* opened to us the Scriptures"! What seraphic moments! what high communion! what loving ministry! A risen Saviour rallying their hearts by His marvellous words and mighty exposition of the Scriptures.

What was the effect — what the necessary result? The two travellers instantly returned to Jerusalem to seek their brethren. It could not be otherwise. If we lose sight of a risen Saviour we are sure to get away from our brethren, sure to get occupied with our own things; to pursue our own way — get into coldness, deadness, darkness, and selfishness. But, on the other hand, the moment we get really into the presence of Christ, when we hear His voice and feel the sweetness and power of His love, when our hearts are brought under the mighty moral influence of His most precious loving ministry, then we are led out in true affection and interest after all our brethren and in earnest desire to find our place in their midst in order that we may communicate to them the deep joy that is filling our own souls. We may lay it down as a fixed principle — a spiritual axiom — that it is utterly impossible to breathe the atmosphere of a risen Saviour's presence and remain in an isolated, independent, or fragmentary condition. The necessary effect of His dear presence is to melt the heart and cause it to flow out in streams of tender affection toward all that belong to Him.

But let us pursue our chapter.

"And they rose up the same hour" of the night — thus proving they had but little business at Emmaus, or how paramount was the blessed object now before them, "and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."

They, too, needed a risen Saviour's challenge to bring them to their senses — to calm their fears and raise their drooping spirits. They needed to realize the power of His presence as the risen One. They had just declared to their two brethren from Emmaus that "The Lord is risen indeed"; but yet when their risen Lord appeared to them they did not know Him, and He had to challenge their hearts with His stirring words, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them."

What tender love! What gracious condescension to their weakness and need! What compassionate entrance into all their feelings, spite of their folly and unbelief! Gracious Saviour! Who would not love Thee? Who would not trust Thee? May the whole heart be absorbed with Thee! May the whole life be cordially devoted to Thy blessed service! May Thy cause command all our energies!! May all we have and all we love be laid on Thine altar as a reasonable service! May the eternal Spirit work in us for the accomplishment of these grand and longed for objects!

But ere closing this brief article there is one point of special interest and value to which we must call attention, and that is, the way in which the risen Saviour puts honour upon the written Word. He rebuked the two travellers for their slowness of heart to believe the Scriptures. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

So also in His interview with the eleven and the rest at Jerusalem. No sooner had He satisfied them as to His identity than He sought to conduct their souls to the same divine authority — the Holy Scriptures. "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you that all things must be fulfilled, *which were written* in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand *the Scriptures*, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

All this is of the deepest possible importance at the present moment. We feel persuaded that professing Christians everywhere need to have their hearts stirred up in reference to the paramount claims of the Word of God, its absolute authority over the conscience, its formative power, its complete sway over the entire course, character and conduct.

It is to be feared, greatly feared, that Holy Scripture is fast losing its divine place in the hearts of those who profess to take it as the divine rule of faith and morals. We have often heard that watchword sounded in our ears, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." Alas! if this motto were ever really true we fear that its truth at this moment is more than questionable. Very few, comparatively, even of those who occupy the very highest platform of profession seem to admit, and still fewer actually acknowledge practically, that *in all things* — whether of faith or morals — in all the practical details of life, in the Church, in the family, in the business, and in our private walk from day to day — we are to be governed absolutely by that commanding, that mighty, that morally glorious sentence, "It is written" — a sentence enhanced exceedingly in value and heightened in its moral glory by the telling fact that it was used thrice by our adorable Lord at the opening of His public career, in His conflict with the adversary, and sounded in the ears of His loved ones just as He was about to ascend into the heavens.

Yes, dearly beloved Christian reader, "It is written" was a favourite sentence with our divine Master and Lord. He ever obeyed the Word. He yielded a hearty and unqualified submission to its holy authority in all things. He lived on it and by it from first to last. He walked according to it and never acted without it. He did not reason or question, imply or infer, He did not add or diminish, or qualify in any one way — *He obeyed*. Yes; He, the eternal Son of the Father — Himself God over all blessed for ever — having become a man, lived on the Holy Scriptures and walked by their rule continually. He made them the food of His soul, the material and the basis of His marvellous ministry — the divine authority of His perfect path.

In all this He was our great Exemplar. Oh, may we follow His blessed footsteps! May we bring

ourselves, our ways, our habits, our associations, our surroundings, to the test of Holy Scripture, and reject with wholehearted decision everything, no matter what or by whom propounded, that will not bear that searching light.

We are most thoroughly persuaded that in hundreds of thousands of cases the first grand point to be gained is to recall the heart to that delightful attitude in which the Word of God is fully owned and submitted to as an absolute authority. It is positively labour lost to be arguing and disputing with a man who does not give Scripture the self-same place that our Lord Jesus Christ gave it. And when a man does this there is no need of argument. What is really needed is to make the Word of God the basis of our individual peace and authority of our individual path. May we all do so!

O come, Thou stricken Lamb of God!
Who shed'st for us Thine own life-blood,
And teach us all Thy love — then pain
Were sweet and life or death were gain.
Take Thou our hearts, and let them be
For ever closed to all but Thee;
Thy willing servants, let us wear
The seal of love for ever there.
How blest are they who still abide
Close shelter'd by Thy watchful side;
Who life and strength from Thee receive,
And with Thee move, and in Thee live.
Ah, Lord! enlarge our scanty thought,
To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;
Unloose our stammering tongues to tell
Thy love, immense, unsearchable.
First-born of many brethren, Thou!
To whom both heaven and earth must bow;
Heirs of Thy shame and of Thy throne,
We bear Thy cross, and seek Thy crown.