

BIBLICAL STUDIES

CLEOPAS AND FRIEND: A DISCOURAGED DUO

Scripture story: Luke 24:13-35

“Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” (Luke 24:13-15)

Did you ever take a Sunday afternoon walk? That’s what Cleopas and his friend, disciples of the Lord Jesus, did on the day of Jesus’ resurrection. They were walking seven miles from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. Emmaus was located on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa where Jonah took his submersion excursion. These two disciples, like Jonah, were going in the wrong direction for the followers of Jesus were back in Jerusalem celebrating His resurrection!

They were leaving behind the most world-changing event of their lives. Jesus Christ, their Champion, had been crucified three days before but had arisen from the dead. Some women had been to the tomb and came back reporting the good news but their report was not believed by all. Luke records that *“Their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.”* (24:11) The doubting duo of Cleopas and his friend left Jerusalem and started for home with heavy hearts. They thought that all their hopes and aspirations had been dashed and therefore, they were sadly walking home to resume a hum-drum sort of life.

As they passed out of Jerusalem they remembered that just one week had passed since their Lord had entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday amid cheers and cries of “Hosanna.” But the atmosphere had suddenly changed - Judas, one of their band, had betrayed Jesus, He had been arrested, condemned and crucified. How things had changed so drastically in just one week! It had been a wonderful three years with Jesus, but it was all over now and they were thinking, “We might as well go back home and make the best of a bad situation.”

As they walked away from Jerusalem, where so much had transpired in the last few days, they continued to verbalize about recent happenings, sharing doubts and fueling each other’s faithlessness. The duo mysteriously became a trio of walkers but the two disciples paid little attention to the other walker Who suddenly materialized beside them and kept pace with them.

This is where the story gets very interesting. These two hurting hikers, these two downcast disciple’s minds were so clouded with doubts that they ignored the One Who had joined them for a Sunday afternoon walk. Evidently, His post resurrection persona was different. Mark’s account states: *“He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.”* (Mark 16:12) Consequently, they did not recognize Him as the One about Whom they had been talking.

He joined in the conversation and what a revealing and reviving stroll it turned out to be! As we analyze the Stranger’s conversation with them, we too can be encouraged as we walk our

Emmaus Roads. His conversation went as follows:

HE EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR THEM.

“Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?” (Luke 24:13-17)

It was Jesus, alive and well! How like the Mender of Broken Hearts to go after two sad saints on the very day of His resurrection! He thought it worthwhile to walk seven miles and spend a couple of hours with two of His fainting followers in order to cheer them!

He knew who these two disciples were.

After shedding His grave clothes, He looked up these two homeward-bound, despondent disciples. Isn't that amazing? Why did He select these two out of the many to cheer? There were other disciples that He could have visited. We may never know the full answer but we can be encouraged to know that He knew that they needed a personal visit from Him. He knew them and He knows us and, just as He cared for them, He cares for us!

He knew where they were.

He Who knows all things, knew just where they were. They were not back in Jerusalem celebrating with the other disciples, they were on a dusty road, plodding along, heads down and hearts broken, when *“Jesus Himself drew near.”* They did not notice Him, but He was there. Many times in our loneliness and sorrow we do not see Him through our tears, but He *“draws near.”* He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother!

He knew they needed His personal attention.

Jesus not only *“drew near”* but we read: *“and went with them.”* Doesn't that bless you? Emmaus was home – they needed to go home. There was comfort in family. Jesus went home with them. *“He went with them.”* Isn't that just like the Good Shepherd? *“He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own; And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known.”*

He knew their thoughts.

His sympathetic companionship encouraged them to unburden themselves to Him. He knew what they were thinking, what they were conversing about and their emotional state, yet He asked them, *“What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”* His inquiry revealed His concern for them and communicated to them His awareness of their state of mind. With that question He drew them out and they began to open up and share their feelings. He is the Great Psychologist! Talk with Him – He listens as One *“who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”* (Heb. 4:15)

He patiently conversed with them.

Jesus asked them about the topic of their conversation. *“Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?” (v.18)* Cleopas' rather abrupt

answer indicates that he did not comprehend Who this “Stranger” was Who had joined him on the journey. Jesus patiently continued the conversation with a very surprising response: *“And He said to them, “What things?”* (v.19)

Was Jesus seeming to be ignorant in order to draw them out? It is a rather humorous response when you think about it. Here was the One Who was at the center of all that had happened in Jerusalem during the past week; the One about Whom everyone was talking and He says to the two disciples, *“What things?”* How human! He was purposefully leading them on, drawing them out. How patient, how unhurried He was.

Here is a side of Jesus that is not usually considered by us in our “sound bite” world. We want and expect short, to the point conversations. Say it and get on with it. I suppose that the sound media has much to do with programming us to think and speak in that manner. However, here in this conversation between the three on the Emmaus Road, Jesus was in no hurry to get the counseling session over with so that He could move on to more important matters. He wanted them to tell Him *“what things”* they had on their minds.

He wants us to “open up” and tell Him *“what things”* are of concern to us. He already knows but He also knows that verbalizing them, talking it out, sharing our burdens and concerns is good for us. It keeps us close to Him for when we talk to God in prayer we are drawing near to Him. Therefore, be always, *“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”* (1 Peter 5:7)

HE EXPOSED THEIR FAITHLESSNESS.

The two disciples, in response to Jesus’ query, *“what things,”* began to unburden themselves to Jesus: *“So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”* (Luke 24:19-24)

When the discouraged duo opened up and started talking they revealed the cause of their despair. It was faithlessness!

Their faith was a past-tense faith.

Notice the terminology they used:

- *“Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet”*
- *“we were hoping”* – that is, they were not now living in the light of that hope; they said they had hoped in the past. A past hope only, leaves one hopeless in the present. All that they had seen and heard in following Jesus, should have given them a present tense and a future tense hope!

- " *we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.*" Again, they no longer held to the hope that Jesus would redeem Israel. Their hope of that happening had vanished.

Hope is futuristic. Hope is an expectation about a positive development in the immediate or eventual future. The realization of that hope may be within the next minute, hour, day, month, etc. But it is always future.

These two disciples had confessed that they had hope in the past, but the events of the last few days had darkened that hope. We should never doubt in the dark what we believed in the light!

The Christian has a future mind-set. The hope, the expectation of the fulfillment of all that Jesus Christ promises, lights up our lives. Jesus said, "let your light shine." Shining is living out the light of hope that is within us.

Their faith was a sight-based faith.

The witness of the angel, the women, and Peter and John, who saw the empty tomb, was not enough proof for them. They said to Jesus, "*Certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.*"

They, like Thomas in the Upper Room, wanted to see before they believed. There are many who say, "Show me and I will believe." God says, "Believe and you shall see." We have not seen the physically resurrected body of the Lord Jesus and yet we believe. Jesus said to the doubting Thomas, "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" (John 20:29) Are you one of the unseeing believers?

Their faith was a dull faith.

Jesus gently but firmly rebuked these two discouraged disciples for being slow to understand what had transpired in the last week. The word translated "slow" in the original is "dull." He said to them, "*O foolish ones, and dull of heart to believe....*" (Luke 24:25)

Jesus had repeatedly said He would be crucified and rise again in three days. (Matt. 12:40; Mark 8:31; Luke 18:33; John 2:19) Luke's report is very clear: "*Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."* (Luke 18:31-33)

What could be clearer than that? Jesus didn't tell them that just once, but several times. As they trudged home to Emmaus, the words of Jesus seemed to have been totally forgotten. How could that be? James, the Lord's half-brother, writes in his epistle that when we hear and do not apply the Word we will forget it. James said, "*Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is*

like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” (James 1:22-24)

That is what these two disciples did. They forgot. How could they forget such a dramatic and and dynamic announcement as “I will rise again”?

But it is the same way with us, isn't it? We have heard God's Word many times but at times it just doesn't seem to register with us. It just goes over our heads. That is why Jesus also said, *“Take heed how you hear.” (Luke 8:18)*

HE EXPLAINED TO THEM THE SCRIPTURES.

“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:26, 27)

Jesus authenticated the Old Testament Scriptures.

In referencing the Old Testament Scriptures, the Lord Jesus not only authenticated both the holy men of old who penned the Scriptures, *“Moses and all the prophets,”* but He put His stamp of authentication upon their writings.

Jesus educated two ignorant disciples.

The Lord Jesus condescended to conduct a Bible conference with only two persons on a seven mile walk the very day of His resurrection! He was the best of Teachers using the best of books, discussing the best of subjects.

He may have begun with the promise of the coming Redeemer given in the Garden of Eden, (Genesis 3:15); the picture of the life-saving Passover Lamb, (Exodus 12); the incident of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, (Numbers 21); the typology in the offering of Isaac, (Genesis 22); the predicted crucifixion of the Messiah in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, etc.

Note the word “opened” in this passage of Scripture:

- Opened eyes - “Their eyes were opened” – Luke 24:31
- Opened Scriptures - “He opened the scriptures” – Luke 24:32
- Opened understanding – “He opened their understanding” – Luke 24:45

This must have been the greatest Old Testament seminar in history. What professor of Old Testament, in our seminaries, would not have traded their degrees for the privilege of listening in on that Bible Conference conducted by the Savior? How I wish I could have heard that lecture!

However, we have something that the two on the Emmaus Road did not have. We have a completed canon of Holy Scriptures and repeatedly the Bible challenges us to take personal responsibility for our own spiritual maturation. For example:

- II Timothy 2:15 *“study to show yourselves approved”;*
- Hebrews 6:1 *“go on to maturity”;*
- I Peter 2:2 *“desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow”;*
- II Peter 1:5 - *“add to your faith.”*

While salvation is an individual transaction between sinner and the Savior, initiated by God, progressive sanctification, that is growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, is an individual interaction with Scripture, initiated by the believer. We do not have Jesus physically present with us to teach us about Himself in the Scriptures, however, we do have the Holy Spirit Who guides us into all truth. (John 16:13) Are we, like the Christians in Berea, daily searching the Scriptures? (Acts 17:11) Or are we like the two on the road to Emmaus?

HE EXPELLED THEIR GLOOM.

“Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.” (Luke 24:28-35)

Their gloom began on heart-break hill.

Up there on Calvary, on one of those three crosses silhouetted against the sky, their Master had died. He, of Whom John Baptist had said, “Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world”; He, Who said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Now it was all over. Gloom settled over their minds and they turned toward home.

Their gloom continued on heart-ache road.

It was seven miles to their home in Emmaus and they trudged, heads down, eyes tear-filled and hearts aching. A Third Walker joined them, but they paid little attention, so deeply discouraged were they.

Their gloom ended with a heart-throbbing discovery.

The Stranger accepted their invitation to have something to eat, when they arrived at their home and, as they sat at the table, He took bread and broke it. Then, as He passed it to them, they saw the wounds in His hands. They said, “It is the Lord, He is alive!” Then, just as suddenly as he appeared to them on the road, He was gone.

Their gloom was replaced by a heart-warming experience.

After the walk and talk that Jesus had with them ...and seeing the nail prints in His hands, all the pieces of the puzzle started to fit together and the words of Jesus made sense to them. For the first time, they began to understand His teaching that had just gone over their heads before. *“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”* We need to learn the secret of the burning heart for it dispels gloom!

Their story has a heart-stirring ending.

“The Lord is alive! This must be told!” The two disciples lost no time in retracing their steps to Jerusalem to share the Good News. May that be our experience for the rest of our lives.

CONCLUSION

What a much-needed lesson we have in this incident for all of the sad and disappointed people of today! The victims of the changing circumstances of life need to take fresh courage from the experiences of Cleopas and friend.

The constant, changeless Christ is *“the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”* He is ready to brighten our pathway with sympathetic companionship; to warm our hearts with new light on life's problems, and to reveal Himself in joy and in sorrow, whether seen or unseen, along the roadways of life.

Christ *is* risen from the dead! Christ *is* the Saviour! Christ *is* the hope of the world! That is the most heart-warming news that we will ever hear or share!

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