

Downcast Talking with the Risen Lord

“They stood still, their faces downcast.” - Luke 24:17

How often I have wondered what it must have been like to stand with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Emmaus! How exciting it must have been to hear the sound of his voice, to see the look in His eyes, and to rejoice in His powerful resurrection. However, the two disciples who were chosen for that singular honor and place in history “were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24:16). Therefore, their emotions were totally opposite from what they should have been. Their faces were downcast, and their words showed hopelessness for they said: “They crucified him, but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” –*Had hoped??*— They certainly didn’t understand that it was in the crucifixion itself that Israel’s redemption occurred, or that their own salvation was now fully paid for, or that the very life of this stranger on the road was their ironclad assurance that an eternity in heaven was now their destiny. No, their faces were downcast as they stood talking with the risen Lord. Would I have been any different? Would you? The answer is found in how we receive the Bible.

What’s amazingly clear is that, in the mind of Jesus, their whole problem was one of a faithless handling of Scripture! “How foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25)! Unkind words? Hardly! This was just what they needed to hear, for the Scripture was sufficient to lift their burdens and to answer all their grief. It is just as John had said about his own reaction to the empty tomb: “They still did not understand *from Scripture* that Jesus had to rise from the dead” (John 20:9). As much as we would like to imagine a personal physical encounter with the risen Lord, we would not have recognized Him any more than did these two disciples, if we are like

them, “foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” The Scripture is sufficient to lift our downcast faces, for it testifies plainly to an empty tomb and a risen Lord.

Is your face downcast today? Are you suffering under the onslaught of overwhelming circumstances that seem to swallow up your joy? If so, let me point you to a diagnostic question that can bring healing to your soul: Have you read the Bible today and received what was necessary to lift your face, to restore your joy, to energize your service to Christ? These two disciples, before their eyes were opened and they recognized Christ, felt within their hearts the burning of Scripture clearly taught by the Master: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us” (Luke 24:32)? Does your heart burn within you as you read the Bible and feel its penetrating touch? If not, pray to God that he would “open your mind so you can understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). Your mind is in God’s hand, since He made it. Simply pray the prayer of the Psalmist: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18). God by His Holy Spirit will encourage you by the Scriptures so that you will not be downcast as you walk and talk with the risen Lord.