

Did not our hearts burn withing us?

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[0 : 00] Well, if we can turn to the passage we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 24. It's a very familiar story, I'm sure, the road to Emmaus.

And I want to look particularly at the words we have in verse 32. For the two disciples said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us?

While he walked with us, while he talked with us, by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures. You know, this is a very appropriate verse for us to look at as we open the Scriptures together tonight because it's a verse which talks a little bit about what the effect, the impact that the open Scriptures have on believers.

These two believers on the road to Emmaus, their hearts burned within them as the Scriptures were opened. It's a very favourite passage of mine because some of you know I work with an organisation called the Emmaus Road Trust.

And we've taken this passage and this verse as our name, as our title, the Emmaus Road Trust, because that trust aims to open up the Scriptures through translation into other Eastern European languages.

[1 : 13] God willing, sometime maybe we can share something of that later at another date. But you see, this verse describes the effect of the open Scriptures on the heart of the believer.

If we love someone, we love to hear of them. We love to read what they've written. So it is with a Christian. The Christian's heart burns within them as they read the words of Scripture and as the Holy Spirit applies them to us.

Bishop Ryle once said, Tell me what the Bible is to a person and I will tell you what that person is. Because that's the pulse that we should try or the barometer to look at if we would know the state of the heart.

He goes on to say, There never was a person truly converted from one end of the world to the other who did not love the revealed will of God. Just as the child, he says, born into the world desires the milk provided for it, so does a soul born again desire the milk of the word.

That's the common mark of God's people. Spurgeon also talked of what he called the believer's extra sense, the sixth sense. He says, whereby we are alive to the Scriptures.

[2 : 26] So we have this wonderful verse here this evening which describes the heart's reaction to the living word and a verse which challenges us, is it not, to ask ourselves, What is my heart like this evening?

Does it burn within me as we study the Scriptures together? Is it hot and burning? Or is it relatively unmoved and cold? I think we learn something from the experience of these two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

I want to look at four ways. Speculate a little with you tonight on why their heart was burning within them. Four things in particular. The first of those four is what we might call the burning of realisation.

The burning of a dawning understanding. Enlightenment. Is it not true that finally sometimes when we get to grasp something that we didn't fully understand before, sometimes there's a great thrill about actually beginning to understand something.

I remember that school mathematics was to me a bit of a foreign language to begin with. Anyway, my father fortunately was a mathematics teacher or maybe unfortunately because every so often he would take me aside and he would test me and see, Do you really know what you've been learning?

[3 : 44] And he would have to take me back to first principles. And it always amazed me how I could sit through week after week of teaching and not understand the maths. And then all of a sudden it would just click into place as it was explained properly.

And there was a great exhilaration as I began to understand. Similarly, if you've ever tried working a computer or a video machine and you read the instruction manual and it seems so difficult. But then all of a sudden you learn how to do it and you think, That wasn't so difficult after all. And there's a thrill and exhilaration. Well, if that's the case with these trivial examples, then how much more so when we begin to understand the wonderful truth that the scriptures, the Bible, make sense.

That it has meaning. That it's not just a jumble of dry writings from ancient Middle Eastern countries. But that it has one complete whole and it makes sense.

One commentator describes that as the first step to salvation. But you see, in contrast, we have here the disciples before the scriptures were opened to them.

[5 : 00] We have the disciples here who weren't in that lovely position. They were disappointed. They were disillusioned. They were bewildered. They were sorrowful even because they didn't properly understand.

And they say in these tragic words, they say, verse 21, But we had trusted that it would be him. There's disillusionment there.

There's bewilderment. There's perplexity. They were missing the picture. Even though they had the evidence of the empty grave, the testimony of those who'd been to the grave, the testimony of angels, and even though they gave a very good testimony of all the events that had come to pass, they were still missing the point.

There was no burning of understanding or enlightenment or realization because they were looking for the wrong things. They were looking for the wrong signs. They didn't even recognize Jesus Christ on the road while they met him because it was not what they were expecting.

They had expected something very different, perhaps a different kind of saviour, a different military political Jewish saviour, and they were disappointed because events had not turned out as they had wanted.

[6 : 10] You know, in a sense, they'd written their own gospel. This was how things should happen, and it hadn't come to pass. And people still write their own gospels and say what God should be like and what God should do.

But until we stop to hear what the scriptures say and have them open to us, then we face disappointment because we miss the burning of enlightenment, of understanding.

Faith comes by hearing the word. If you want that burning of enlightenment, go to the word. Well, if the first step towards salvation is seeing that the scripture all has meaning, that it's all one coherent whole, then surely the second step is seeing that that coherent whole is in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

You see, Jesus Christ is a great central theme of the scriptures. Christ is on every page of the scriptures. What did he say? What does it say in our passage? He went right back to Moses and the prophets and he explained in all the scriptures the things concerning himself because Jesus Christ was on every page.

And the disciples' hearts began to burn within them as everything started to fall into place. Jesus Christ, the great central theme. Jesus Christ, that last piece in the jigsaw that makes the picture snap into focus, without whom we will be bewildered, we will be disappointed.

[7 : 36] You know, these two in the road to Emmaus, they were privileged to have what probably, you know, we can say was the greatest Old Testament exposition of all time because the preacher was Christ himself. The congregation was only too big.

And yet Christ took the time to minister to them. What was the theme of the sermon? The sermon could be entitled Christ the Key, Christ the Fulfillment, Christ in all the scriptures.

You know, the theologians tell us that the Old Testament scriptures that Christ would have been referring to here, they would point forward to Christ in a number of ways. The Old Testament scriptures pointed forward historically, that God was preparing a perfect time and a perfect place, and that all the events of the children of Israel and the whole story from the Garden of Eden up until the crucifixion was God's preparing for a saviour historically.

The theologians tell us that the scriptures point forward typologically, a big word, simply meaning that in the Old Testament there are foreshadowings of Christ. people and images raised up to foreshadow the coming of Christ.

You remember in the wilderness, the the the time that the encampment of the children of Israel was was infested with snakes, and they were told to raise up a brass serpent on a pole, and that those

people who looked to the brass serpent would be safe, they'd be saved.

[8 : 58] A type of Christ, a foreshadowing of Christ being raised up for all men to look unto him and be saved. Or we have King David, who was again a type of Christ, a foreshadowing in many ways.

Or the story of Abraham and Isaac, and the the the sacrifice of the son. All foreshadowings of Jesus Christ. We're told that the Old Testament scriptures point forward to the Lord prophetically.

We know some of these prophecies telling us about him, the hope for the future, Emmanuel, God with us, born of a virgin. And the scriptures also point forward psychologically.

Because in all the scriptures in the Old Testament, they were creating a yearning for a Messiah. A longing for the one who would come and redeem Israel. And so perhaps this theme, this Old Testament exposition, dwelt on some of these subjects.

We are told that he began with Moses. Chapter 1, Genesis, page 1. He went right back to the beginning because Christ was there. Perhaps he took them to Genesis chapter 3 where the promise was that the seed of the woman would crush the devil, would crush the serpent.

[10 : 12] The seed of the woman would eventually conquer the evil one. He was there in Genesis chapter 3. Perhaps he showed them how all the Old Testament sacrifices were superseded by the true Lamb of God.

the everlasting sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Perhaps he read them the story of the Passover and how the lintel would be sprinkled with the blood, the Passover blood, so that the angel of wrath would pass over.

And how his blood would be used to sprinkle his people, that we would be sprinkled with that blood and the angel of death would pass over and we would be reconciled to God. Perhaps he took them to Isaiah's writing, to the suffering servant, the one crushed for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and as a lamb before his shearers was silent.

Perhaps he took them to the Christmas prophecies. Emmanuel, God with us. Wonderful counsellor. Perhaps he took them to the book of Daniel and showed them the son of man whose dominion would be an everlasting kingdom.

We don't know where he took them. But he took them through the scriptures, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, and he showed them himself. And their hearts began to burn within them as they realised how all had not been lost and all wasn't confusing and that Christ indeed answers and makes sense of the whole riddle of history.

[11 : 36] Has that been your experience? Has your heart began to burn within you as you realise that the scriptures are special, that the scriptures make sense, that they're one coherent whole, and that God is speaking to you through those scriptures?

Does your heart burn because of that? Perhaps you felt some stirring or some warmth over the years but you don't quite understand what's happening like the disciples in the road to Emmaus. They didn't have it all worked out.

They didn't recognise Christ. But perhaps you this evening have known some of that stirring as the word of scripture is read and is studied. Perhaps Christ is opening the scriptures to you, telling you that they're true.

and if that's the case then I would ask you to embrace them and to beg him that he would warm your heart further. So firstly we have the burning of that dawning understanding, that realisation that it all makes sense.

But secondly we move on and we see a different kind of burning in the Christian's experience. It's what we might call the burning of a soul-felt understanding. And it flows from the first.

[12 : 40] It's a continuation of the beginning to understand to the soul-felt understanding. And it's much more important because it's the witness of God's spirit in our hearts as we respond and warm to the words of life.

You see these disciples on the road to Emmaus they had in a sense what was an early Pentecost because the spirit was witnessing in their hearts to the wonderful truths of Christ.

And there was that inward conviction that this is the truth. You know one of the peculiar marks of Christians down through the centuries down through the ages is that they have a unique we have a unique relation to the word of God.

As I said Bishop Ryle said tell me what the Bible is to a person and I'll generally tell you what that person is. Because down through the ages all the saints have loved God's word.

Oh how love I thy law wrote King David. Paul was passionate about the scriptures. Christ used the scriptures. Christ used them as his reference point. And all the saints down since Christ all the converts we see in our own lives that we've known there's this new love of the scriptures.

[13 : 57] The saints gather around the scriptures they read the scriptures they study the scriptures they share the scriptures and our hearts begin to burn with so felt understanding. As we see perhaps beyond simply Christ fulfilling the Old Testament scriptures beyond simply the making sense bit but we begin to see sense for me.

We begin to have a personal encounter with the living Christ. It was for me he hung and suffered there. The believer's heart begins to burn within them as we see the purpose behind it all as we see the success behind it all as we see the sufficiency behind it all the hope that is there the fullness behind the whole plan.

Believer's hearts will resonate to the words of the open scriptures. You know if you're perhaps if you play a stringed instrument like a violin or a viola or a cello you'll know that if you play one note and one string one of the other strings will resonate in harmony with that first string.

And the Norwegian fiddle for example is built on that basis that the strings ring out as they hear the right note from other strings. They can't help it the string resonates as the right note is played.

And it's a little bit like that with the believer is it not as the words of scripture flow over us we resonate in response. Or if you were to take a handful of steel filings and a handful of sawdust and if you were to mix them all up and lay them on the table and then take a magnet over the mixture the steel filings would jump to the magnet because there's a relationship a relationship between the steel and the magnet there's a living relationship but the wood chips would remain dead and unmoved.

[15 : 46] So it is with the believer and the word of God. What response does our heart make this evening as these scriptures are open to us? Do they burn with enlightenment as Christ shows himself?

Do they burn with so-felt wonder as we realise that it was for me? Could we shout yes I know it's not in our tradition but could we shout inwardly yes this is the word of life.

Did not our heart burn within us as he opened to us the scriptures? We've seen the burning of understanding we've seen the burning the soul felt burning of that second understanding and then thirdly I think we see something here which I'm going to call the burning of Christ's companionship the burning of Christ's companionship you know the Emmaus Road disciples I often think they were very very privileged and blessed to have had the living risen Christ come alongside them for these hours along the way and to come in and eat with them what a tremendous thing can you imagine if you were out walking the hills and we met Christ himself and he communed with us and he showed us himself in the scriptures what a tremendous blessing blessing but you know something if we're believers this evening you and I have something even more special because we have the constant companionship of Christ moment by moment day by day we if we're believers have the constant inseparable companionship of the living risen Christ because he lives and where do we find him? where are we going to find this living risen Christ our companion? we find him in the scriptures we find him in the open scriptures and he himself opens the scriptures continually for us showing us himself you know it's interesting that the Emmaus Road disciples here they only recognised Jesus in person once they'd seen him in the scriptures you see that?

they didn't recognise him to begin with and it's only as he showed them himself in the scriptures and they began to see the real Christ not the one they'd imagined not the one they wanted but the real Christ as they saw him in the scriptures then they recognised him in person do we expect anything less?

[18 : 12] do we expect to meet Christ and have a relationship with Christ if we never open his word? if we never open and find him in the word? you know it's in the word of God that he lets us see that we have one who sticks closer than any brother a friend a comforter it's in the scriptures that we find out that we have one who has promised never to leave us or forsake us that we have his constant companionship it's in the scriptures that we find that we've got a friend who can relate to and understand our temptations and our besetting sins and our job insecurities and our doubts and the trials of our faith and our family worries and our work worries and our children's worries and our relationship worries and our future worries we have one who understands and we find that in the scriptures and our hearts burn do they not?

with his companionship as he opens the scriptures and shows us himself Christ the object of the burning heart does your heart burn within you?

because you have the promise of one who will stick closer than any friend do you have that this evening? finally and fourthly I think there's another kind of burning here there's a burning of donning understanding soul felt understanding Christ's companionship and fourthly and finally we have we see here very clearly the burning of a great secret to share a great secret to share we all know what it's like to have a great secret a great surprise surprise you're burning to tell you can't wait to pick up the phone and phone your friend and say I got the job I passed the exams the grandchild's born whatever it is a great secret we can't wait to tell well you know the Amish Road disciples had great news and they couldn't wait to tell it's not so different from the news that we have what was their news?

they got up that night and they went back the way they'd come back to their friends they couldn't wait to tell them Christ has risen it's true he's risen he met with us personally everything is not lost everything is not tragic everything has meaning now it's better than we had even imagined because the meaning makes better sense it's a much better Messiah Christ this living Messiah is much better than we'd imagined and he's explained wonderfully that it was all planned anyway what a wonderful God they couldn't wait to tell their friends what a wonderful saviour we found him in all the scriptures and it all makes perfect sense and what's more they wanted to tell their friends you know your heart will burn within you when you discover that your heart will burn within you when it's open to you your heart will burn within you when your soul knows that it's for you and your heart will burn inside you when you know Christ's companionship they couldn't wait to tell if only we had one atom of their burning of their excitement to share that good news if only we were not so lukewarm and end drawn and introspective

Christ is risen he will meet with you personally through the scriptures what have we seen well one or two things just in summary one or two thoughts just as we leave is it not interesting that Christ met with those people who were struggling to understand you know it was those people who were walking along on the road to Emmaus communicating discussing all the things that had happened we're told that they were discussing these things what manner of communication all the things that had happened they talked and walked all the things that had happened Christ met with that kind of a person he met with those who were struggling to understand now they might not have had it all correct indeed we saw they got a lot wrong but they were seeking they were trying to understand the meaning of all these things that's the kind of person he meets with let's not just leave the bible on the shelf let's struggle to understand and ask Christ to explain these things to us it's interesting also that Christ met with those who were discussing him in sincerity we have a picture of what Christian fellowship should be like those who discuss the things of the

[22 : 26] Lord that's the kind he met with does our congregation do our congregations do we meet and discuss the things of the Lord is that where we'll have to be founded we notice also that Christ as we saw revealed himself through the open scriptures that's what he chose to do let's go with the scriptures and not look elsewhere if you feel in need of Christ if you feel in need of a knowledge of the saviour find them in the scriptures find them in this passage Christ singled out these two disciples to hear the scriptures being opened what a tremendous privilege but what about us what about you and me have we not been singled out by the very circumstances of our birth and our life and our family and everything to even be here this evening we've been singled out to be found in church where the scriptures opened even this evening what a great privilege we notice that Christ didn't force himself or impose himself on these disciples he waited to be invited in please don't miss that opportunity invite him in we've seen that the believer has a relationship to the word of

God there's this resonating this feeling at home in the word of God feeling a bond to the word of God the believer's extra sense what response does our heart make this evening might just be flickering might just be weak and flickering not really a burning not a roaring fire but just a flickering but if that's the case then let's scour the scriptures and let Christ warm us did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the scriptures beginning with Moses and all the prophets may he do that for us this evening Amen