

“HE OPENED TO US THE SCRIPTURES”

I. Introduction

- A. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin makes the astute observation that “faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree... faith vanishes when it is not supported by the Word.” [3.2.31]
1. If we indulge thoughts that are not rooted in the Word of God, our faith will falter and be shaken.
 2. And when that happens, it is only when the Word is once again impressed upon our minds that our faith is renewed and strengthened.
- B. This is what we see happening in the passage that we are studying today.
1. The encounter between Jesus and the two disciples who were traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus is only recorded in Luke’s Gospel.
 2. One of the things that we have seen throughout this Gospel is that Luke has a special concern for ordinary people.
 3. In these verses, he tells us about two otherwise unknown disciples who are in a state of inconsolable grief, and then he shows us how Jesus turns everything around for them by opening up the Scriptures to them.

II. Shattered Hopes

- A. The seven-mile walk during which this remarkable conversation took place probably would have taken about two hours.

1. These two disciples were dealing with sadness, disappointment, and bewilderment.
 2. They were deeply saddened by the cruel and horrific death to which Jesus had just been subjected.
 3. They were also greatly disappointed, because it seemed to them that Jesus' crucifixion dealt a crushing blow to their messianic hopes about him.
 4. They were also utterly bewildered, because they had heard reports about the empty tomb, and the appearance of the angels, and the announcement that Jesus was alive.
- B. These are the things that the two disciples are talking about when Jesus appears in their midst unrecognized and asks what they are discussing.
1. They answer his question by recounting the tragic events that had just transpired.
 2. And then they say this: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."
 3. Notice that they express this in the past tense, saying that they *had hoped* this about Jesus.
 4. Those hopes have been shattered by Christ's death.
 5. This doesn't mean they have lost their faith, but it does mean that their faith has been gravely shaken.
 6. Moreover, when they say that they had hoped that Jesus would "redeem Israel," they are saying that they were hoping that he would deliver the Jewish nation from political oppression.
 7. This reveals that they did not have an accurate understanding of the nature of their bondage.

8. Like the other disciples, they were not thinking of a spiritual redemption.
 9. This explains why the cross made no sense to them.
- C. We sometimes have our hopes and expectations disappointed.
1. This often takes place in a manner that is somewhat analogous to what these two disciples were experiencing.
 2. We hope that God will fix to the problems that we face in this world, but that is not what is promised to us in the gospel.
 3. Jesus died on the cross to save us from the judgment that our sins deserve.
 4. This does not mean that we should think that our Lord does not care about the things that trouble us in this world.
 5. On the contrary, we are so precious to him that not even a hair can fall from our heads apart from his will.
 6. Nor should we think that God does not have the power to do anything about our troubles.
 7. He is almighty God; nothing is too difficult for him.
 8. Because he is our good shepherd, we can be confident that we will never want for anything.
 9. The Bible assures us that even the most difficult things in our lives are being used by our Lord to accomplish his good purposes for us.
- D. The disciples on the road to Emmaus had access to teachings that would have corrected their perspective on the kind of redemption that Jesus came to secure for his people.
1. Jesus said that he came to give his life as a ransom for many.

2. He said that he came to lay down his life for his sheep.
3. He said that he was going to be betrayed and put to death and then rise on the third day.
4. On top of that, the Old Testament speaks of the sufferings of the Messiah in numerous places, but the Jews were highly selective in their reception of the Messianic prophecies.
5. While they eagerly embraced the things that spoke of the Messiah's glory, they set aside the things that spoke of his suffering.
6. The long and short of it is that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had not listened to the teachings that would have provided the light that they needed to see the cross properly.
7. Yet in spite of this failure, Jesus did not give up on them.
8. They had faith, but it needed to be fanned into flame.
9. Here we see proof that our Savior does not break the bruised reed or snuff out the faintly burning wick.
10. As J.C. Ryle observes, "A deep sense of sin, a humble willingness to be saved in God's way, a teachable readiness to give up our own prejudices when a more excellent way is shown, these are the principal things. These things the two disciples possessed, and therefore our Lord 'went with them' and guided them into all truth."

III. Light from the Word

- A. After hearing what the disciples have to say, Jesus rebukes them for their slowness of heart to believe the things that the prophets had said.
 1. Then he proceeds to lead them in a Bible study that is unlike any other.

2. In Luke's words, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."
3. Here is one of the New Testament's clearest assertions that the Old Testament is about Christ.
4. This truth was also conveyed at multiple points during Jesus' public ministry.
5. Once when he was engaging the Jewish leaders in debate, Jesus said to them, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." (John 5:39-40 ESV)
6. And on the mount of transfiguration, Jesus was met by Moses and Elijah, figures who represent the law and the prophets.
7. When Luke uses the terms "Moses and all the Prophets" in our text, he is referring to the first two parts of the Hebrew Bible.
8. The term "Moses" refers to the first five books of the Old Testament, the books that were written by Moses.
9. Those books were often referred to by the Jews as "the Law," and they are known to us as the Pentateuch.
10. The term "the Prophets" refers not only to the Old Testament books that are named after individual prophets, but also to the historical books of the Old Testament, which were written by prophets in a prophetic spirit.
11. The third part of the Hebrew Bible, which was referred to as "the Writings" by the Jews, includes the Psalms and the other poetical books.

12. While that third section is not explicitly referenced here, it is mentioned by the name "the Psalms" in verse 44 of this chapter.
- B. The Hebrew Bible promised and foreshadowed Christ in many ways.
1. In the Law, Christ was typologically foreseen in the priesthood, the sanctuary, the sacrifices, and the ceremonies.
 2. In the Prophets, Christ was typologically depicted in deliverer figures like Joshua and the judges and Israel's kings, and his coming was predicted in the great messianic oracles set forth by the prophets.
 3. In the Writings, Christ is seen in the figure of the righteous sufferer, in the personification of wisdom, and in the figure of the king who delights in the law of God.
 4. These are the things that Jesus taught the two disciples as they walked on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus.
 5. Imagine what that must have been like for them.
 6. In that two hour walk, their Bible was opened to them in light of Jesus' fulfillment of all that had been foretold.
 7. Prior to that point, their trust in God's promise was a matter of embracing Christ through types and shadows.
 8. But now, for the first time ever, Christ is exhibited to them as the substance of all of those things.
 9. While those types and shadows were sufficient and efficacious to save God's people prior to the coming of Christ, now that he has come they give way to the reality to which they pointed.
 10. The most decisive events in history have already taken place.

11. Christ has come, and he has accomplished the salvation of his people.
12. All that remains now is for his finished work to be applied by the Holy Spirit to all of those who have been appointed to eternal life.

IV. Renewed Hope

- A. When Jesus and the two disciples arrive in Emmaus, Jesus acts as if he is going to continue traveling further down the road.
 1. The phrase “acted as if” does not mean that Jesus was being duplicitous or false here.
 2. In that culture, it would be presumptuous and rude to impose yourself upon people without an invitation.
 3. Though it is Jesus’ intention to stay with them, he acts in this manner because he is drawing forth their desire to seek further communion with him.
 4. Here we see an example of the interplay between God’s sovereignty and our response.
 5. We find a similar example in the book of Genesis when Jacob is wrestling with God in the figure of the mysterious man who came to him at Peniel.
 6. While they were wrestling, the man said, “Let me go,” but Jacob refused, saying, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” (Gen. 32:26)
 7. God used that ordeal to draw out a response of faith from Jacob.
 8. Jesus is doing something similar here with these disciples.
 9. He is testing their faith.

10. He is looking to see how they have received the things that he has been teaching them.
 11. Have they grown tired of his company, or has their spiritual appetite only been whetted so that they are eager for more?
 12. By welcoming him into their home, they received a wonderful blessing.
 13. Instead of remaining mired in their despondency, their eyes were opened and they saw for themselves that Jesus has risen indeed.
- B. While the experience of those disciples that day was unique, there is a parallel in our lives.
1. Our Lord wants us to seek fellowship with him.
 2. The measure of blessing that we receive through our communion with him depends on our faithful and diligent use of the means that he uses to deliver those blessings to us.
 3. If we neglect public worship, or Christian fellowship, or private prayer and meditation on the Word, we are missing out on untold spiritual riches.
 4. Imagine what these two disciples would have missed if they had said goodnight to Jesus and parted ways with him instead of inviting him to stay with them that night.
 5. Who knows what you might be passing up when you fail to make the most of the opportunities that the Lord provides for you to draw near to him.
 6. As God says to us through the psalmist, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psa 81:10 ESV)
- C. Luke tells us that when Jesus sat down to share a meal with his hosts, he was the one who took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

1. Usually these actions would be performed by the hosts, but for some reason the hosts deferred to Jesus on this.
 2. Perhaps they did so because they had developed such great respect for him as a teacher of God's Word.
 3. Whatever the reason, it was at this moment that their eyes were opened so that they could recognize who this man really is.
 4. You may have noticed that there is a close similarity between how Jesus' actions at this meal are described and how his actions are described at the institution of the Lord's Supper.
 5. While these two disciples were not present at the Last Supper, Luke certainly would have been aware of the similarity between how he was describing these two events.
 6. That being the case, it may be that a subtle point is being made here about how the breaking of bread in the sacrament illustrates the meaning of Christ's death on the cross.
- D. Once Jesus has revealed his identity to the two disciples, he vanishes from their sight.
1. This sudden departure is met with a response of joyful wonder in these disciples.
 2. When they look back upon their encounter with this extraordinary figure, they say, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"
 3. Take note of the focus of those words.
 4. These disciples are not caught up in the fact that they have just been in the presence of the risen Christ.
 5. The thing that they focus upon is the effect that his teaching had upon them.

6. Even for them, these people who were eyewitnesses of the resurrection, Christ's saving benefits are mediated through his Word.
7. The thing that made their hearts burn with spiritual fervor was not their direct encounter with the risen Christ.
8. It was his teaching of the Word that made their hearts burn within them.
9. This shows how misguided it is for people today to seek some kind of direct, mystical encounter with Jesus apart from the Bible.

V. Conclusion

- A. We do not have the risen Christ physically present with us to open the Scriptures to us, but we do have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts to illuminate our minds so that we may have a saving and edifying understanding of the Scriptures.
- B. The Christ who opened the Scriptures to the disciples on the Emmaus road still opens them to his people today.
- C. And in doing so, this that he enflames our hearts with love toward him and with zeal for the glory of his name.
- D. As we will sing in a few moments,

*The church from her dear Master
Received the gift divine,
And still that light she lifteth
O'er all the earth to shine.
It is the golden casket,
Where gems of truth are stored;
It is the heav'n drawn picture
Of Christ, the living Word.*