***Slow to Believe***

**Ready for Pentecost #1, Luke 24:13-35 April 24, 2022**

***Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are,  
and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!  
Did not Christ have to suffer these things  
and then enter into his glory?”*Luke 24:25-26**

**Later that same day . . . .**

*13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.*

*17 He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”*

*They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”*

*19 “What things?” he asked.*

*“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”*

*25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

Luke 24:13-27

1. Once again, Jesus takes the initiative (but recognizing Jesus is always his prerogative)

2. The two disciples had only the “ordinary” part of the story

3. The “three days” would be a special sign for these sincere Hebrews  
(see Genesis 22:1-5 and the commentary in Hebrews 11:17-19; Hosea 6:1-2; Luke 11:29-32)

4. Jesus appeals to both mind and heart: the disciples are “not-mindful” and “hesitant”

**Did not Christ have to suffer . . . .**

4 Surely he took up our infirmities

and carried our sorrows,

yet we considered him stricken by God,

smitten by him, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,

and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

each of us has turned to his own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53

1. Jesus’ suffering is the fulfillment of the Old Testament picture of substitutionary atonement

2. Jesus’ suffering is at the center of God’s redemption plan (Romans 5:1-11)

3. Jesus’ suffering begins to answer my questions about suffering (1 Peter 2:21)

**. . . and then enter into his glory?**

*22 I will declare your name to my brothers;*

*in the congregation I will praise you.*

*23 You who fear the Lord, praise him!*

*All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!*

*Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!*

Psalm 22 (see also the end of Psalm 22 and Acts 2:31)

*11 After the suffering of his soul,*

*he will see the light of life and be satisfied;*

*by his knowledge my righteous*

*servant will justify many,*

*and he will bear their iniquities.*

Isaiah 53

1. Jesus is already fulfilling the Old Testament’s anticipation of Messiah’s reign

2. The New Testament is the “Cliffs Notes” version of Jesus’ seminar on Moses and all the Prophets

**Training camp for faith**

1) Exercise head and heart

#### Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 7

Q 20. Are all people then saved through Christ  
 just as they were lost through Adam?

A. No. Only those are saved who through true faith   
 are grafted into Christ and accept all his benefits.1

1 [Matt. 7:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%207:14&version=nrsv); [John 3:16, 18, 36](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203:16,%2018,%2036&version=nrsv); [Rom. 11:16-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%2011:16-21&version=nrsv)

Q 21. What is true faith?

A. True faith is not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true   
 all that God has revealed to us in Scripture;1

it is also a wholehearted trust,2 which the Holy Spirit creates in me3 by the gospel,4   
 that God has freely granted, not only to others but to me also,5  
 forgiveness of sins,  
 eternal righteousness,  
 and salvation.6

These are gifts of sheer grace, granted solely by Christ’s merit.7

1 [John 17:3, 17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2017:3,%2017&version=nrsv); [Heb. 11:1-3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb.%2011:1-3&version=nrsv); [James 2:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%202:19&version=nrsv) 2 [Rom. 4:18-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%204:18-21&version=nrsv); [5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%205:1&version=nrsv); [10:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%2010:10&version=nrsv); [Heb. 4:14-16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb.%204:14-16&version=nrsv)  
 3 [Matt. 16:15-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%2016:15-17&version=nrsv); [John 3:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203:5&version=nrsv); [Acts 16:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2016:14&version=nrsv) 4 [Rom. 1:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%201:16&version=nrsv); [10:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%2010:17&version=nrsv); [1 Cor. 1:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Cor.%201:21&version=nrsv)  
 5 [Gal. 2:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.%202:20&version=nrsv) 6 [Rom. 1:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%201:17&version=nrsv); [Heb. 10:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb.%2010:10&version=nrsv) 7 [Rom. 3:21-26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%203:21-26&version=nrsv); [Gal. 2:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal.%202:16&version=nrsv); [Eph. 2:8-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph.%202:8-10&version=nrsv)

2) Obedience and prayer are exercises for our faith

*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”*

*“Here I am,” he replied.*

*2 Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”*

*3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”*

Genesis 22 (see also the women’s obedience at the beginning of Luke 24)

2) At some point, true faith will recognize Jesus

*30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

Luke 24

**Resources for studying Luke**

*Bible.org* has some wonderful resources at [*https://bible.org/book/Luke*](https://bible.org/book/Luke)

I. Howard Marshall’s Greek commentary is my go to help (Eerdmans, 1978)

Spurgeon has a “Jesus Near but Unrecognized” message on this text at

[https://www.spurgeongems.org](https://www.spurgeongems.org › chs1180) *[› chs1180](https://www.spurgeongems.org › chs1180)*

Spurgeon “Folly of Unbelief” is at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/folly-of-unbelief/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/folly-of-unbelief/%23flipbook/)

J. C. Ryle has an interesting commentary at [*https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm*](https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm)

Bob Deffinbaugh has a very interesting sermon series on Luke at [*https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles*](https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles)*.*

If you want to equip yourself to explain why we believe in resurrection, Michael Horton has a wonderful, if a bit heavy, article at [*https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/*](https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/)

Pink has an interesting “Christian Fools” message at [*https://www.monergism.com/christian-fools*](https://www.monergism.com/christian-fools)

Tim Keller has several faith challenges I like:

a wonderful summary of the gospel at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-the-bible-how-the-good-news-about-jesus-is-essential-tim-kelle/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-story-of-the-bible-how-the-good-news-about-jesus-is-essential-tim-kelle/)

a “Defeating” at [*https://firstpresaugusta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Deconstructing-Defeater-Beliefs.Tim-Keller.pdf*](https://firstpresaugusta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Deconstructing-Defeater-Beliefs.Tim-Keller.pdf)

a helpful chart on religion and the gospel at [*https://www.courageouschristianfather.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Religion-vs-The-Gospel-Tim-Keller-1.pdf*](https://www.courageouschristianfather.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Religion-vs-The-Gospel-Tim-Keller-1.pdf)



**Luke’s chronology**

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## The Road to Emmaus

### J.C. Ryle at [*https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/emmaus.html*](https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/emmaus.html)

[Luke 24:13-35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2024:13-35&version=ESV)

The history contained in these verses is not found in any other Gospel but that of Luke. Of all the eleven appearances of Christ after His resurrection, none perhaps is so interesting as the one described in this passage.

Let us mark, in these verses, what encouragement there is to believers to speak to one another about Christ. We are told of two disciples walking together to Emmaus, and talking of their Master's crucifixion. And then come the remarkable words, "While they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them."

Conference on spiritual subjects is a most important means of grace. As iron sharpens iron, so does exchange of thoughts with brethren sharpen a believer's soul. It brings down a special blessing on all who make a practice of it. The striking words of Malachi were meant for the Church in every age --"Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another--and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for those who feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine says the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." (Mal. 3:16, 17.)

What do we know ourselves of spiritual conversation with other Christians? Perhaps we read our Bibles, and pray in private, and use public means of grace. It is all well, very well. But if we stop short here we neglect a great privilege and have yet much to learn. We ought to "consider one another to provoke to love and good works." We ought to "exhort" and "edify one another." (Heb. 10:24; 1 Thess. 5:11.) Have we no time for spiritual conversation? Let us think again. The quantity of time wasted on frivolous, trifling, and unprofitable talk, is fearfully great. Do we find nothing to say on spiritual subjects? Do we feel tongue-tied and speechless on the things of Christ? Surely if this is the case, there must be something wrong within. A heart right in the sight of God will generally find words. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matt. 12:34.)

Let us learn a lesson from the two travelers to Emmaus. Let us speak of Jesus, when we are sitting in our houses and when we are walking by the way, whenever we can find a disciple to speak to. (Deut. 6:7.) If we believe we are journeying to a heaven where Christ will be the central object of every mind, let us begin to learn the manners of heaven, while we are yet upon earth. So doing we shall often have One with us whom our eyes will not see, but One who will make our hearts "burn within us" by blessing the conversation.

Let us mark, secondly, in these verses, how weak and imperfect was the knowledge of some of our Lord's disciples. We are told that the two disciples confessed frankly that their expectations had been disappointed by the crucifixion of Christ. "We had hoped," said they, "that it had been He who would have redeemed Israel." A temporal redemption of the Jews by a conqueror appears to have been the redemption which they looked for. A spiritual redemption by a sacrificial death was an idea which their minds could not thoroughly take in.

Ignorance like this, at first sight, is truly astounding. We cannot be surprised at the sharp rebuke which fell from our Lord's lips, "how foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe." Yet ignorance like this is deeply instructive. It shows us how little cause we have to wonder at the spiritual darkness which obscures the minds of careless Christians. Myriads around us are just as ignorant of the meaning of Christ's sufferings as these travelers to Emmaus. As long as the world stands the cross will seem foolishness to natural man.

Let us bless God that there may be true grace hidden under much intellectual ignorance. Clear and accurate knowledge is a most useful thing, but it is not absolutely needful to salvation, and may even be possessed without grace. 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.

Let us mark, thirdly, in these verses, how full the Old Testament is of Christ. We are told that our Lord began "with Moses and all the prophets, and expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

How shall we explain these words? In what way did our Lord show "things concerning himself," in every part of the Old Testament field? The answer to these questions is short and simple. Christ was the substance of every Old Testament sacrifice, ordained in the law of Moses. Christ was the true Deliverer and King, of whom all the judges and deliverers in Jewish history were types. Christ was the coming Prophet greater than Moses, whose glorious advent filled the pages of prophets. Christ was the true seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head--the true seed in whom all nations were to be blessed--the true Shiloh to whom the people were to be gathered, the true scape-goat--the true bronze serpent--the true Lamb to which every daily offering pointed--the true High Priest of whom every descendant of Aaron was a figure. These things, or something like them, we need not doubt, were some of the things which our Lord expounded in the way to Emmaus.

Let it be a settled principle in our minds, in reading the Bible, that Christ is the central sun of the whole book. So long as we keep Him in view, we shall never greatly err in our search for spiritual knowledge. Once losing sight of Christ, we shall find the whole Bible dark and full of difficulty. The key of Bible knowledge is Jesus Christ.

Let us mark, finally, in these verses, how much Christ loves to be entreated by His people. We are told, that when the disciples drew near to Emmaus, our Lord "made as though he would have gone further." He desired to see if they were weary of His conversation. But it was not so. "They constrained Him, saying, abide with us--for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them."

Cases like this are not uncommon in Scripture. Our Lord sees it good for us to prove our love, by withholding mercies until we ask for them. He does not always force His gifts upon us, unsought and unsolicited. He loves to draw out our desires, and to compel us to exercise our spiritual affections, by waiting for our prayers. He dealt so with Jacob at Peniel. "Let me go," He said, "for the day breaks." And then came the noble declaration from Jacob's lips, "I will not let you go except you bless me." (Gen. 32:26.) The story of the Canaanitish mother, the story of the healing of two blind men at Jericho, the story of the nobleman at Capernaum, the parables of the unjust judge and friend at midnight, are all meant to teach the same lesson. All show that our Lord loves to be entreated, and likes importunity.

Let us act on this principle in all our prayers, if we know anything of praying. Let us ask much, and ask often, and lose nothing for lack of asking. Let us not be like the Jewish king who smote three times on the ground, and then stopped his hand. (2 Kings 13:18.) Let us rather remember the words of David's Psalm, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." (Psalm. 81:10.) It is the man who puts a holy constraint on Christ in prayer, who enjoys much of Christ's manifested presence.

# "From Heartbreak to Heartburn" (Luke 23:54-24:35) Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435*](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435)

54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

24:1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?” 19 “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” 33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

### Introduction

It is at this time of year, unfortunately, that the people of Dallas are reminded of a very tragic event—the assassination of President John Kennedy. If you are like me (and old enough), you probably can vividly remember just where you were and what you were doing at the time of his death. What you and I were doing was probably not that important, but because it occurred in close proximity to this national disaster, it has been indelibly etched in our minds.

The Lord’s table, or Communion, is a similar occurrence, I believe. It was deliberately associated with a very warm and wonderful event—the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus it was etched in the hearts of the disciples of our Lord. The “last supper,” so-called, was a very significant event, but not an altogether pleasant memory. The disciples were very sad because Jesus was talking about His own death, and about one of them being His betrayer, and even about Peter’s denial. In addition to all of this, the disciples argued among themselves as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest. One would hardly wish to re-enact the “last supper,” for one of these was enough. While the Lord’s appearance to the two men on the road to Emmaus began on the road to this village, the realization that this man was Jesus did not come until the time when the Lord broke the bread at the table. It was this association of the realization of the Lord’s presence and the breaking of bread which created a very positive warmth to the breaking of bread, and specifically to the Lord’s table. We see in the Book of Acts that the breaking of bread was a daily experience in the early church (cf. [Acts 2:42, 46](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### Tensions of the Text

The story of the two men on the road to Emmaus is one of the heart-warming accounts of our Lord’s appearances to men after His resurrection. By virtue of the length of this account, one can see that Luke places a great deal of importance on this incident. It takes up much of his account of our Lord’s post-resurrection appearances. And yet, in spite of the length of this text and the warm reception the account has historically received, there are several “tensions of the text” to be dealt with, several difficulties which need to be explained.

First, there is the fact that these two “disciples” are never mentioned, either before or after. Why is Luke’s spotlight on these two unknown disciples, (Cleopas, of course, is named, but not really known[139](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8203_2786128)), when he has little to say about the eleven? Where are the eleven disciples? Another difficulty is why these two men are on their way to Emmaus in the first place. One would expect them either to be on their way to Galilee, as Jesus and the angels had instructed the disciples ([Matthew 28:7, 10](javascript:%7b%7d); [Mark 16:7](javascript:%7b%7d)), or to remain in Jerusalem, at least until the “mystery” of the disappearance of Jesus’ body had been solved. Still another tension is this: Why did Jesus not reveal Himself to the disciples by simply appearing to them, rather than as He did here and elsewhere? How easy it would have been simply to appear, as He did later, and to show them His hands and side. Finally, I am puzzled by the sequence of events in this story. Why did Jesus not reveal Himself first, before He rebuked the two men,[140](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8204_2787064) rather than to reveal Himself after all He said and did, and simultaneously with His “disappearance” or vanishing from sight? Why did Jesus not give these men any time with Him as the Lord Jesus? These tensions will be addressed as we proceed with our study.

### Background (23:54–24:12)

54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

24:1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

The women had no part in the burial of our Lord, which was done by Joseph of Arimathea (23:50-53), assisted by Nicodemus ([John 20:38-39](javascript:%7b%7d)). They did manage to watch the burial of the body of Jesus and to mark in their minds the exact place where Jesus was placed. This was more than just knowing the correct tomb; it was knowing where the body lay in that tomb.[141](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8211_2789456) In the providence of God, the women were not able to return to the tomb earlier than on the first day of the week, the “third day,” since the evening was rapidly approaching at the time of Jesus’ burial, and since the next day was the Sabbath. The women procured the necessary spices and had them on hand, but could do nothing with them until the day following the Sabbath. They waited until early in the morning, and then went out to the tomb. So that it could not be said that the women merely forgot the burial place of Jesus and went to the wrong tomb, Luke (along with the other gospel writers) reports that the angels informed the women that they had come to the right place, seeking Jesus, but that He was not there ([Luke 24:5-7](javascript:%7b%7d); cf. also [Matthew 28:5-6](javascript:%7b%7d); [Mark 16:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). Matthew tells us that one angel invited the women to see the place where He once lay (28:6).

The angels gently rebuked the women for seeking the body of Jesus on the third day, when He had told them while still in Galilee that He would be rejected, put to death, and rise again on the third day ([Luke 9:22](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus was alive. Why were they looking for the living among the dead? The angels’ words jogged the minds of the women, and they remembered that this was exactly what Jesus had told them, long before His death. They now saw that His death, as well as His resurrection, was a necessity, and also a prophecy which had to be fulfilled. For them to be seeking for His body was then an act of unbelief—a loving act of unbelief, but unbelief nonetheless.

In Matthew and Mark, the angels and Jesus both instructed the women to return to Jesus’ disciples to tell them that He was alive and that He would meet them in Galilee. Luke only tells us that they went to the disciples and when they told their story, the disciples refused to believe them, thinking that these “emotional women” were simply out of their heads, totally hysterical, and overcome with their grief. Peter did go out to the tomb (there seem to have been numerous trips to the tomb that day), and he found everything as the women had described it, but still he was not convinced. He simply went home puzzled.[142](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8214_2792227)

But the puzzling thing to me is that no disciple seems to have seen an angel in the tomb that day.[143](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8216_2792808) The women saw the angel(s), but not the disciples. Even the guards who were posted at the tomb saw the angel who rolled away the stone and were frightened nearly to death ([Matthew 28;2-4](javascript:%7b%7d)). But not so much as one disciple? Why not? Why did Jesus not make it easy for the disciples to believe He had risen from the dead? Why did He delay in revealing Himself to the men, when the women were privileged to see Him sooner? I believe the reason may be suggested by an earlier incident, which was the first realization of Jesus’ identity by His disciples at the time of His transfiguration. Jesus first asked His disciples who men thought Him to be. Then He asked them who they thought He was. Peter responded that He was the Christ, the Messiah, to which Jesus responded,

“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” ([Matthew 16:17](javascript:%7b%7d)b).

Jesus did not want to hurry the process, to rush the conclusion as to who He was. He wanted His disciples to be absolutely convinced of His identity. Fundamental to this was an understanding from the Scriptures that His own prophecies about His rejection, death, and resurrection were consistent with the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets. Let us now turn to the account of the appearance of our Lord to the two men on the road to Emmaus to observe more closely the way in which Jesus revealed not only His resurrection, but His personal presence.

### The Risen Lord and Two Downcast Disciples (24:13-24)

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?” 19 “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

In this section, the scene is set. The characters are Jesus and the two men, one of whom is named Cleopas. Let us look first at our Lord and then at the two men. The Lord appeared to these two men as a man. From His appearance one would have thought of Jesus as only a man. From Mark’s gospel (16:12) we learn that Jesus appeared to these two “in a different form.” This might only mean that Jesus appeared to the men in His resurrected body, but it seems to mean that He appeared to them in a body that was not immediately recognizable in appearance. Might this mean, for example, that the nail scars were not apparent, so that all the tell-tale indications of His identity would have been concealed?[144](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8223_2796695)

Not only did Jesus appear to these two as a man, He also appeared to them as one very much like them. He too was a traveler, it would have seemed. He was, like them, walking to Emmaus. To be more accurate, it appeared that He was walking further than Emmaus, for He acted as though He would go on when they stopped. Strangely, it would seem, Jesus even appeared as one slightly below those with whom He traveled. By this I mean that Jesus was perceived by these men either to be totally “unplugged,” totally aloof to what was going on, or somewhat slow on the uptake. The words of these two men to Jesus were a mild rebuke, as though as to say, “Come on, man, get with it!”

Now let us turn our attention to these two men. These men were disciples, men who were intimately acquainted with and associated with the eleven. Luke referred to them as “two of them” (verse 13), the “them” obviously referring back to the eleven apostles ([Luke 24:9-11](javascript:%7b%7d)). From what they tell our Lord, they were privy to all that had taken place and to all that was reported to the apostles by the women. They were not numbered among the eleven, but they were closely associated with them. They were, in truth, disciples of our Lord.

These disciples were, however, very discouraged. They had, for all intents and purposes, given up all hope. Their faces were sad and downcast (verse 17). They had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah (verse 21), but due to His death they had concluded that He was only a prophet—a true prophet of God, a powerful prophet, but only a prophet, who died like many of the other prophets of old.

These two men told Jesus of other data which they had chosen to ignore, reject, or misinterpret. It was, they said, the “third day” since He had died. This must be a reference to Jesus’ words that He would rise again on the third day. What was more, some of the women, they told Jesus, had gone out to the tomb and found it empty. They further claimed to have seen angels, but alas they did not see Jesus.[145](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8228_2799023) The very things which seemed to point to the resurrection of Jesus had no impact on these two men at all.

These men were on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were “on their way to the country” ([Mark 16:12](javascript:%7b%7d)). We do not know the exact location of the small village of Emmaus, but only that it was approximately seven miles from Jerusalem. What we do know is this: they were not going to Galilee, as the angels and Jesus had given them instructions through the women. Both Matthew (28:7,10) and Mark (16:7) specifically state that the angels and Jesus told the disciples that Jesus would meet them in Galilee. Where then should all of Jesus’ disciples have been (or at least have been on their way to) if they had believed in the Lord’s resurrection and had obeyed His instructions? Peter “went home” ([Luke 24:12](javascript:%7b%7d)), which I understand to mean that he went back to the place where he was staying in Jerusalem. The two men on the road to Emmaus may have been doing similarly. If they did not live in Emmaus, they may have been staying there, in the suburbs as it were, for the Passover celebration. The huge influx of people may have necessitated finding accommodations outside the city. They did not even stay in Jerusalem, until the mystery of the disappearance of Jesus’ body was solved. They certainly did not leave for Galilee.[146](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8230_2800586)

I see these men as utterly unbelieving, utterly defeated, throwing in the towel and going home. In the face of much evidence to the contrary, these two disciples seem determined not to believe in the Lord’s resurrection. They have absolutely no hope. Had Jesus not sought them out, one wonders what would have become of them. And these two men, I believe, are typical of all the rest, especially of the eleven. The eleven seem to have stayed in Jerusalem, but in heart they are just as downcast, just as defeated, just as unbelieving. These men are a picture of complete defeat and despair. There was to them no hope left. It was all over.

### Jesus’ Correction and Instruction (24:25-27)

25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Jesus’ words to these two men were not flattering. They were a rebuke for their spiritual dullness and for their failure to believe all that the prophets had spoken. The word “all”[147](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8236_2802075) is an important one. It indicates that the belief of the disciples was selective. They believed part of the prophets’ revelation, but not all. Which part did they believe, and which part did they not believe? Our Lord’s words in verse 26 give us the answer. The message of the prophets concerning the coming Messiah was a blending of suffering and glory. The prophets spoke in what appeared to be a contradiction in terms. They spoke of Messiah’s rejection and suffering, as we see in [Isaiah 52](javascript:%7b%7d) and 53, yet they also spoke of His triumph and glory (cf. [Daniel 7:13-14](javascript:%7b%7d); [Zechariah 9](javascript:%7b%7d),14).

There is a difference in the way the prophets dealt with the tension of the two truths of Christ’s suffering and of His glory. The prophets accepted both aspects of prophecy, even though they did not understand how they could be compatible. They searched the Scriptures to understand how both could be true. This is what Peter has written in his first epistle:

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow ([1 Peter 1:10-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The prophets accepted God’s word as it was revealed, even though they did not understand how it could be true. But most of the Israelites chose to reject the suffering side and only to focus on the glory dimension. They did this not only with respect to the Messiah, but also with respect to themselves. The false prophets were those who gave warm, reassuring, promises of peace and prosperity, while the true prophets spoke of suffering and of tribulation. Thus, the people were inclined to listen to the false prophets and to persecute those who spoke for God (cf. [Jeremiah 23](javascript:%7b%7d), 26,28,32,38).

The disciples of our Lord did not wish to hear of Jesus’ sufferings, but only of His triumph. Thus, Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him for speaking of His coming rejection and death ([Luke 9:22](javascript:%7b%7d); cp. [Matthew 16:21-23](javascript:%7b%7d)). All of the disciples, including these two men on the road to Emmaus had so rigorously held to a non-suffering Messiah, a triumphant King, but not a suffering Servant, that they concluded Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah because He had suffered and died. In spite of a mountain of evidence, all of which pointed to His resurrection, they were solidly convinced it was all over, and that He, alas, was only a prophet.

Jesus first rebuked these two men for their spiritual dullness, and then He went on to show them from the whole Old Testament, beginning with Moses[148](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8242_2804939) and culminating in the prophets, that the Messiah was prophesied to suffer and to be glorified. While it is not spelled out, I understand Jesus to be saying it was not enough to grant that Messiah’s suffering was somehow compatible with His glory; it was not enough to grant that suffering was a means to His glory; suffering was a part of His glory. Take careful note that the worship of the Messiah in Heaven is the worship of the One who was slain (cf. [Revelation 1:17-18; 5:1-14](javascript:%7b%7d), esp. vv. 6, 9, 12).

The passages which Jesus taught, and His interpretation of them, are not given to us. How wonderful it would have been to have had this message on tape or in print. Why, then, are we deprived of it? Let me suggest two possibilities. First, this presents us with the opportunity and the challenge to search the Scriptures for ourselves. We know from what Luke has told us, so to speak, that there is “gold in them thar’ hills,” that the Old Testament Scriptures are rich in prophecies pertaining to Christ, but it is for us to search it out. Second, we are given some helpful clues and some “starters” from the texts that the apostles used, as recorded in the Book of Acts. Thus, we have at least some of the passages revealed which Jesus must have brought to the attention of His disciples when He taught them.[149](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8244_2806517) Among the texts that Jesus must have referred to would be these: [Deut. 18:15-19](javascript:%7b%7d); [Psalm 2](javascript:%7b%7d); [Psalm 16](javascript:%7b%7d); [Psalm 22](javascript:%7b%7d); [Psalm 118:22](javascript:%7b%7d); Cf. [Exodus 20:11](javascript:%7b%7d); [Ps. 146:6](javascript:%7b%7d); [Daniel 9:24](javascript:%7b%7d)ff.[150](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8245_2807129)

We are not told until later what impact this teaching had on the disciples, but when we get to verse 32 we overhear them saying to each other,

“Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

Here was the basis for the change, from “heartbreak” to “heartburn”: the Scriptures were taught and were “caught.” There was no more need for despair.

### The Recognition of the Lord Jesus (24:28-35)

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” 33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Jesus acted as though He would go on. Why? I think it was to provide the two men with the opportunity to respond to what He had been teaching. Jesus had begun with a rebuke, and His teaching had cast a whole new light on the Old Testament prophecies. How would they respond? Did they wish to reject it? If so, they would gladly have let Him go on His way. But they urged Him to stay with them. They wanted more. They desired to be with Him, even though they did not yet realize who He was. Humanly speaking, had they not urged Him to stay, they would not have had their eyes open to recognize who He was. What joy lay ahead for those who would sup with the Savior.

I have come to the conclusion that there was no mysterious or mystical revelation of Jesus in the breaking of the bread. I am not sure these men saw the “nail-scarred hands.” They surely do not say so, nor does Luke. The reason they recognized Jesus was because “their eyes were opened,” their blindness was removed. It was not that which Jesus did in the breaking of the bread which was so convincing, but the work of the Spirit, who convinced the men of the meaning of the Scriptures and thus enabled them to see Christ for who He was. Jesus did take the lead in the breaking of the bread, which would seem to be unusual, but this, in and of itself, is not the key to the opening of the eyes of these two men.

It was during the breaking of the bread that the identity of this “stranger” was made known to the two men. Jesus immediately disappeared. They immediately returned to Jerusalem to report to the rest what they had experienced, only to be told that they already knew Jesus was alive, because He had appeared to Peter in the time of their absence.[151](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8255_2810468)

### Conclusion

As I understand our text, there are two major points of emphasis. These are: (1) the breaking of bread; and, (2) the Word of God. Let us consider each of these as we conclude the study of this text.

It was not some mystical, magical event which occurred here, as Jesus broke the bread, but rather the simple (but miraculous) opening of the eyes of these two men which enabled them to see Jesus as Jesus. The breaking of the bread was not the means of revealing Jesus, but rather the occasion for it. Thus, Luke tells us the means was the opening of their eyes (verse 31), something which I believe the Spirit of God did. And so too when the men looked back on the occasion, they spoke of the breaking of the bread with delight, but they also spoke of the “burning” in their hearts, produced by our Lord’s teaching of the Scriptures. The effect of linking the revelation of Christ with the breaking of bread was to create a very warm, a very positive attitude toward that institution which the church would regularly observe—the Lord’s table. It is no wonder the early Christians found such joy in daily breaking bread together.

There is a sense, I think, in which this breaking of bread with these two men was a prototype of heaven and of the joys which await the Christian. Jesus eagerly looked forward to the “last supper” even though it was a sad occasion in many respects ([Luke 22:15](javascript:%7b%7d)). He spoke of the kingdom in terms of a banquet meal ([Luke 22:24-30](javascript:%7b%7d)), at which time He would serve them ([Luke 12:37](javascript:%7b%7d)). Jesus said that He would not eat the Passover again until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God ([Luke 22:16](javascript:%7b%7d)). The fellowship which the two men would have wished to have must wait until the kingdom. The Lord’s supper looks back, as it also looks forward, to that banquet. Jesus disappeared because that great day was yet ahead when they would fellowship at His table in the kingdom. But this meal made the joy and anticipation of that occasion even greater.

The second area of emphasis is that of the Scriptures.[152](https://bible.org/seriespage/heartbreak-heartburn-luke-2354-2435#P8262_2812660) In the upper room discourse ([John 14-17](javascript:%7b%7d)), Jesus spoke a great deal about the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. He urged His disciples to abide in Him, which was linked with abiding in His Word ([John 15:7, 10](javascript:%7b%7d)). Those who loved Him, Jesus said, would keep His Word (14:23-24) and His commandments (15:10, 14). When Jesus departed, the Holy Spirit would come (14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7ff.). The Holy Spirit would bring the words of Jesus to the disciples’ remembrance and would teach them all things (14:26). Jesus prayed that His disciples would be sanctified, and that this would happen by His Word (17:17). As they proclaimed the Word, the Holy Spirit would empower their message, convicting men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (16:8-11).

The angels rebuked the women for looking for the living one among the dead, or for forgetting the words of Jesus which He spoke to them while still in Galilee, that He would be rejected, put to death, and then rise again. These words of Jesus were the “living Word,” the “Word of God.” They should have believed the Word of God.

The two men on the road to Emmaus were rebuked for being slow to believe all that God’s Word taught about the coming of Messiah. They failed to understand or to believe that the Savior must both suffer and be glorified. Their failure was with respect to the Word of God, the Old Testament Scriptures. And so too Jesus turned the attention of the eleven disciples to the Scriptures, which spoke of Him, of His suffering, death, and resurrection ([Luke 24:44-46](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The method which Jesus used was, at first, perplexing, but now it all makes sense. Why did Jesus simply not reveal Himself to the disciples as the risen Savior? Would that not have convinced them quickly and easily? Why did Jesus wait to reveal His identity until after He had rebuked and instructed the two men? Would they not have paid more attention to His words if they knew who it was who was speaking to them?

The first thing this text indicates to me is that the two disciples desperately needed the Word of God, just as all men need it. Apart from divine revelation, who would have ever conceived of God bringing about the salvation of man as He did, through the suffering of the Savior? Prophecy is needed by fallen and finite men because God’s ways are infinitely higher than ours, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. Thus, if God did not make His thoughts known to us, through the Word of God, we would never know them. The reason these two men (and the other disciples too) viewed their circumstances with despair was because they did not view them from God’s point of view. They did not judge their circumstances spiritually. When viewed biblically, everything that had happened was a part of God’s plan, which included not only the suffering and death of Messiah, but also His resurrection. Finite, fallen men need the Word of God if they are to recognize the hand of God in history.

Fallen and finite men need not only the Word of God; they need the Spirit of God. While men would not know God’s ways apart from His Word, they would not know God’s ways from His Word, unless it were rightly understood. These disciples had the Scriptures, but their understanding of them was warped by their sin, their presuppositions, and their ambitions. It was only when our Lord explained the Scriptures to them, and when the Holy Spirit opened their eyes, that they understood the mind of God. This is what Paul says in [1 Corinthians 2](javascript:%7b%7d). No wonder the upper room discourse focused so much on the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

I believe you and I fall into the very same trap into which the disciples fell. We read and study the Scriptures through the grid of our own sin, of our own desires, our own ambitions and preferences. We arrive at our own idea of what God should be like, and what His kingdom should be, and then we rearrange the Scriptures, over-emphasizing some, and ignoring others, so that we have nicely (but wrongly) proof-texted our own thinking. How often we do this in those areas of tension, where two seemingly contradictory things are somehow linked; for example, in the biblical truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, or in the areas of suffering and glory (our own, I mean). We would rather have one of these areas (the pleasant, warm and fuzzy one, of course) and reject the other. This we cannot do. We may, like the prophets, have to hold two truths in tension, seeking and praying to understand their inter-relationship, but we dare not reject one and hold to the other exclusively. Let us give much thought to this.

Why did Jesus not reveal Himself to the disciples, rather than to teach them from the Old Testament? The reason has already been given in Luke. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man requested that Lazarus be sent to his Father’s house, to his five brothers, so that they can be warned (16:27-28). Jesus’ answer was that they had Moses and the prophets (16:29), to which the man protested that a warning from one who had risen from the grave would be more forceful, more convincing. To this Jesus replied,

“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead” ([Luke 16:31](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

There is a very important principle taught here, and it is this: THOSE WHO REJECT THE WORD OF GOD WILL NOT BE CONVINCED BY HIS WORKS.

Is this not patently clear throughout the gospels? The scribes and Pharisees rejected Jesus’ teaching, and so too they rejected all of His works. Men who reject the Word of God will not be convinced by His works.

Jesus could have appeared to His disciples as the risen Lord. But He deliberately restrained Himself, finding it necessary first of all to turn them to the Word of God. Once these men were enabled to understand the Scriptures, they were then free to see that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus would put first things first, and thus He laid the biblical foundation; He outlined the biblical necessity of His suffering, death, and resurrection, and then He revealed its fulfillment—in Him!

But wouldn’t Jesus’ words to these two men have been more forceful, would they not have had a greater impact, had the men known who was speaking to them? Strangely enough, I think the answer may be both “Yes” and “No.” Surely Jesus’ teaching would have had a great impact if they knew it was Jesus. On the other hand, the joy and emotion of knowing it was He would probably have distracted them from a serious consideration of the Old Testament passages.

There is a principle here which applied to Jesus’ teaching, just as it does to all teaching of the Scriptures. Consider it with me for a moment: THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES IS INDEPENDENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE SPEAKER.

God’s Word, as the writer to the Hebrews put it, has been communicated in various ways ([Hebrews 1:1](javascript:%7b%7d)). At times, God has spoken through pious, godly, faithful men. He has often spoken through less than godly men. Jonah, for example, was in rebellion, but God’s message, spoken by him, converted the entire city of Nineveh. Balaam spoke for God, and even his donkey did. Paul spoke of those who proclaimed the message of the gospel from false motives, and yet the gospel was advanced ([Philippians 1:12-18](javascript:%7b%7d)). It is not the proclaimer who gives power to the Word of God. The Word of God itself has power:

For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do ([Hebrews 4;12-13](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

Thus, when Paul taught, he avoided persuasive human techniques which would focus men’s attention on him, rather than on the Word of God itself. Paul did not seek to convince and persuade, but to speak in simplicity and clarity, looking to the Holy Spirit to convince men and to change them. Paul’s method of teaching was governed by his confidence in the Scriptures and the Spirit of God:

“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” ([Acts 20:32](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God ([1 Corinthians 2:4-5](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God ([2 Corinthians 2:17](javascript:%7b%7d), NASB).

There are some versions of the Bible in which the words of our Lord are printed in red, as though they are more important than those other biblical words, spoken by prophets who were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that all Scripture was inspired and thus profitable ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](javascript:%7b%7d)). In our text, Jesus’ actual words are not recorded. Our attention is turned to the Old Testament Scriptures and to its prophecies pertaining to Christ.

When you think about it, Jesus could have identified Himself as the Lord to these two men, and then proceeded to teach them on the basis of His authority. As it turns out, Jesus taught them on the basis of the authority of the Scriptures. Think of it, instead of teaching this lesson as the Christ, He taught this lesson about the Christ, but as a mere man, as a total stranger, even as a man who seemed poorly in tune and not in touch with what was going on. The two disciples rebuked Him for asking what things were going on in Jerusalem. They saw Him as one who was ill-informed, out of touch. And yet, as such, Jesus rebuked them and taught them the most marvelous survey of the Old Testament ever taught. The men later recognized the impact of Jesus’ teaching—it set their hearts afire, not just because Jesus taught them, but because the Scriptures were taught accurately, and thus with their own power and that of the Holy Spirit. It was the Scriptures, then, as explained by Jesus Himself and as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that opened the eyes of the disciples so that they were ready and able (in God’s timing) to discover who it was who was with them.

This text sharply underscores the importance of the Scriptures. The Word of God is authoritative; it is powerful, and it is also of the highest priority. How are men to live today? How is God’s plan and purpose to be known to fallen, finite, men? By the Word of God. How can we know the will of God for our lives? How can we rightly interpret our own circumstances? Only through the Word of God, interpreted and applied by His Spirit. In the closing verses of the Gospel of Luke, we are emphatically reminded of the priority which the Scriptures should and must have in our lives.

This text should provide us with the motivation to make the Word of God a priority in our lives. It should also teach us a method by which to study the Word. We should first study the Word of God recognizing our own fallenness, our own inclination to twist and distort the Scriptures to proof-text our own preferences and preconceived ideas. We must come to the Scriptures looking for God to change our lives, suspecting our temptation to change God’s Word to conform to our lives. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand the mind of God. And, we must read and study the Bible as a whole, not just in its parts. We must read and study the Bible in much bigger chunks, and not simply race through a couple of devotional thoughts on passages randomly selected. It is the whole counsel of God which we must learn. Our goal should be to learn all that God has taught us about Himself, ourselves, the gospel, and our mission, not just the parts we like to hear, that make us feel good. Let us go to the Word of God so that He can rearrange us, rather than to rearrange His Word.

In our text, God’s Word was being perfectly fulfilled, but these depressed disciples didn’t know it. God’s risen Son was walking with them, but they didn’t recognize Him. How often is that true of us? How do we think of Jesus as far away, when He is beside us, indeed, through His Spirit, is within us? The nearness of God, and the enjoyment of Him, comes from being immersed in His Word, and being illuminated by His Spirit.

139 There are a number of attempts to identify this man, but all of these lack proof, and thus all must be seen as highly speculative.

140 It has been pointed out that the wording of the text does not really demand that it be two men, but that it could conceivably be two people, even a husband and wife. I am nevertheless inclined to view it as two men.

141 Since the tomb was hewn out of the rock, there would have been no mound of fresh earth, as we might expect, to give away the location. It would also seem that this tomb was a “family tomb,” a burial place not just for Joseph, but for other family members as well. This would explain the statement that it was a tomb in which no one had yet been laid. It could have been a tomb where the bodies of others already lay. There must have been shelves carved out of the stone, so that the women observed the exact place where Jesus was laid. This was the place that was now empty, except for the burial cloths, still remaining.

142 John, you will recall ([John 20:2-10](javascript:%7b%7d)), accompanied Peter to the tomb. Unlike Peter, John was convinced by the evidence at the tomb alone (the way that the burial garments were found, perhaps?) that Jesus had risen, but without seeing this as a biblical, prophetic necessity. Since he did not yet understand the Scriptures to teach that Jesus must rise from the dead, he did not believe out of necessity, but out of the weight of the evidence and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

143 I take it from the account that the angels “appeared” to the women, that is, that they were not just sitting there waiting, nor that they walked up, but that they were there, unseen, and then, at the right time, revealed themselves to the women (cf. [Luke 24:4](javascript:%7b%7d)). I believe the angels were also present when Peter (and John) arrived, but that they did not reveal their presence to them.

144 I have, in the past, held that the two men recognized Jesus as he was breaking the bread, because they saw the nail prints in His hands. The text does not tell us this. The text only tells us that the disciples recognized Jesus while He was breaking the bread, not necessarily that they recognized Him because He broke the bread.

145 We know that Jesus did appear to some of the women on their way home from the tomb ([Matthew 28:9-10](javascript:%7b%7d)), but this must have been on some later trip to the tomb. These men left the city of Jerusalem before this later report came in.

146 It is my personal opinion that had Jesus not sought out some of the men disciples in Jerusalem, none of them would have gone to Galilee to meet the Lord there. Jesus therefore appeared to Peter (cf. [Luke 24:34](javascript:%7b%7d)), causing the others to finally be convinced of the truth of the account given earlier by the women.

147 Note the two “all’s” in verse 27—”all the prophets,” and “all the Scriptures.” Jesus was very thorough in His exposition. He taught the “whole counsel of God pertaining to Messiah’s suffering and glory, and He did so from all the Old Testament.

148 I take it that “Moses” means “the books of Moses,” that is, the Pentateuch. In other words, Jesus led them through the Old Testament, from Genesis to Zechariah, showing them that suffering and glory could not be separated in the prophecies pertaining to Messiah.

149 I am inclined to think that Stephen’s message in [Acts 7](javascript:%7b%7d) is similar, in many ways, to Jesus’ teaching of the two on the road to Emmaus. Stephen emphasized the hardness of heart that kept the Jews from understanding that suffering was a part of God’s promise to give them a kingdom, and because of this, they rejected and persecuted the prophets, culminating in the crucifixion of Christ. Note how much suffering is a part of Stephen’s message.

150 Some of the passages in Acts which supply us with the preaching of the apostles and the texts to which they referred are: [Acts 2:22-36](javascript:%7b%7d) (The resurrection of Christ); [Acts 3:11-26](javascript:%7b%7d) (esp. v. 18); [Acts 7](javascript:%7b%7d)—Stephen’s sermon which summarized the history of Israel; [Acts 17:1-3](javascript:%7b%7d); [Acts 26:22-23](javascript:%7b%7d)

151 One almost gets the impression that Jesus was in more than one place at one time, as all of these appearances are compressed into a relatively short period of time.

152 There might well be a connection between the first area of emphasis—the breaking of the bread—and the second area—the Word of God. If the Scriptures are the “bread of life,” then it was in the breaking of the bread of God’s Word that the Lord made known to the two men. Is this not true for men today? Jesus is made known as the bread of His Word is broken.

## Folly of Unbelief

Spurgeon at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/folly-of-unbelief/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/folly-of-unbelief/%23flipbook/)

##### “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”— Luke xxiv. 25.

THE two disciples who walked to Emmaus and conversed together, and were sad, were true believers. We may not judge men by their occasional feelings. The possession of gladness is no clear evidence of grace; and the existence of depression is no sure sign of insincerity. The brightest eyes that look for heaven have sometimes been holden so that they could not see their heart’s true joy. Be not cast down, my brethren and sisters, if occasionally the tears of sadness bathe your cheeks. Jesus may be drawing near to you, and yet you may be troubled by mysteries of grief.

     The Lord Jesus Christ came to the two disciples, and took a walk of some seven miles with them to remove their sadness; for it is not the will of our Lord that his people should be cast down. The Saviour does himself that which he commanded the ancient prophet to do. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.” Thus he spake and thus he acts. He was pleased when he went away to send us another Comforter, because he wishes us to abound in comfort; but that promise proves that he was, and is, himself a Comforter. Do not dream, when in sadness, that your Lord has deserted you; rather reckon that for this very reason he will come to you. As her babe’s cry quickens the mother’s footsteps to come to it more speedily, so shall your griefs hasten the visits of your Lord. He hears your groanings; he sees your tears— are they not in his bottle? He will come to you as the God of all consolation.

     Observe that, when the Saviour did come to these mourning ones, he acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, “I know why you are sad.” No; he waited for them to speak, and in his patience drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn hence the way of wisdom. Do not talk too much yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations: even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep, and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy hath an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties: do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them, and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by facing the disease of sorrow the cure is half effected; for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery, and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, ye who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine.

     Learn also a sacred lesson, O ye mourners! It is well for you, when you are pouring out your griefs, that you do so before the Lord. These two troubled wayfarers, though they knew it not, were telling their sorrow to him who best of all could help them to bear it. You may tell your friends, if you will, and it will be some relief to you; but if you seek the throne of grace, and make the Redeemer your chief confidant, your relief will be sure. Get you alone; shut to the door; bow there apart from the disciples, and say, “Jesus, Master, I would tell thee that which saddens me! Thou great High Priest, who wast compassed with infirmities, thou wilt understand me better than my nearest friend, and I would place myself beneath thy care!” How great the privilege that we have access with boldness to the ear and heart of Jesus our Lord!

     Again, learn another point of wisdom. When our Lord had heard their statement of distress he might immediately have comforted them: a word would have done it. Did he not say “Mary,” and did she not at once turn and say, “Rabboni” with ecstatic delight? He went more wisely to work than to administer hurried consolation: he rather rebuked than encouraged them. He began by saying, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” Observe that I quote the Revised Version, for the Authorized is too harsh. Our Lord did not call them fools, but foolish persons. The difference is rather in the manner than in the sense. He chided them; gently, but still wisely. He let them know that their unbelief was blameworthy, and he called them foolish for indulging it. O beloved brother, if thy Master chide thee, do not doubt his love! If, when thou goest to him in grief, he answers thee roughly, it is his love scarcely disguised, which thus seeks thy truest welfare. If thou believe in thy Lord, thou wilt reply, “Master, say on.” If he call thee foolish, thou wilt wonder that he does not say something worse of thee; and in any case thou wilt trust him after the manner of Job when he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

     Especially observe that our Saviour’s rebuke was aimed at their unbelief. Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that he calls them foolish; it is about this that he chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty. Regard unbelief as a fault rather than a weakness. Brace yourselves to seek a braver and more constant faith than you have reached as yet. Why should we go on blundering, and misjudging, and therefore fretting when a little consideration will set us right, and at the same time cause us to honour our Lord, and to be ourselves filled with joy and peace through believing?

     I am going to handle this rebuke as God the Holy Spirit shall help me; first addressing it to the true believer, and secondly, to the seeker. I shall have to bring forth some bitter things which will act as a tonic, but by giving tone to your system, they will, in the end, remove your fears better than sweeter matters would have done. Hear then our Lord say, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!”

     In speaking to believers, I would have them observe that our Lord rebuked their unbelief under two heads: first, as being folly, and secondly, as arising from slowness of heart.

     First, then, UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. Not to believe all that the prophets have spoken, and not to draw comfort out of it, is great folly. Folly! Note the word. “O fools! O foolish men!” It is folly such as makes the tender Jesus cry out.

     It is folly because it arises from want of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness. Is it not? If these two disciples had sat down and said, “Now the prophets have said concerning the Messias that he shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and thus was it with our Master,” they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had said, “The prophet David wrote, ‘They pierced my hands and my feet,’” they would have recognized in this their crucified Lord. And if then they had turned to the other passages of the prophets in which they speak of Messiah’s future glory, they would have been refreshed with hope. In the Scriptures they would have found types, and figures, and plain words, in which the death and the rising again, the shame and the glory of Christ are linked together, and his cross is made the road to his throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. The women reported that the body was no longer in the tomb, and that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive; two apostles went to the sepulchre, and gave in a like report; and this tallied with the Lord’s own words, in which he made Jonah his type, because he came up from the deep on the third day. But they forgot the Scriptures; they did not think of that great source of hope. Their eyes were dimmed with tears, so that they did not see what was plain before them. How many a precious text have you and I read again and again without perceiving its joyful meaning, because our minds have been clouded with despondency! We take the telescope, and try to look into heavenly things, and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety till we cannot see anything; and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen. Do you not think, beloved, you that are depressed and sorrowing to-day, that if you thought more of the promises revealed in God’s Word, you would soon see things differently, and would rise out of your downcast condition? You put your Bibles away, and read nothing but the roll of your troubles. There are no handkerchiefs for the tears of saints like those which are folded up within the golden box of God’s Word. He who inspired this volume is “The Comforter”; will you not apply to him in your dark hours? O you, whose melancholy arises from forgetfulness of the words of your heavenly Father, of the tender Saviour, and of the divine Spirit, I beseech you be more considerate! Think of God’s providence, his unchanging love, his power, his faithfulness, his mercy. Think of the promises, and as you handle them by thought, they will exhale a sweet perfume which will delight you. Holy thought will charm you out of your griefs. But what folly it is that, for want of thought, we should bow our heads like the bulrush, when, like the sunflower, we might look at the light till we became little suns ourselves!

     Unbelief is folly because it is inconsistent with our own professions. The two disciples professed that they believed in the prophets; and I have no doubt that they did do so. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as divinely inspired, and therefore infallible; and yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the prophets at all. Are we not often found guilty of like inconsistency? O brethren, it is one thing to say, “I believe the Bible,” but it is quite another thing to act upon that belief! We have more of seeming faith than of real faith. That Book is true, and every promise in it is true, and I know and believe that it is so; and yet, when I come to the test, how much of faith evaporates, and how sadly my fluttering heart proves that my belief was more in fancy than in fact! There is more infidelity in the best believer than he dreams of. We think we believe in the gross; and yet, when it comes to the detail, and we have to deal with this promise and with that as a matter of fact in every-day life, we have to light a candle, and sweep the house, to find our faith. What folly this is! If the Word of the Lord be true, it is true, and we ought to act upon it; if it be not true, why do we profess to believe it? That which is unquestionably true will bear all the strain and pressure which life and its trials may put upon it, and it is for us to act upon this belief. Brethren, it ill becomes us to play at believing; let us have our wits about us, and make serious business of that which is not sent to delude us, but soundly to instruct us. The Word of the Lord is in harmony with his providence; and as we believe him as to the one, we must trust him as to the other. We may safely rest the weight of our body and soul, our present and future, upon the sure promise of a faithful God; and we are bound by our profession to do so. It is folly to call ourselves believers in the Bible, and then to doubt and distrust.

     Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness, because the evidence which should cheer us is so clear. In the case of the brethren going to Emmaus they had solid ground for hope. They speak, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as “certain women.” Yet there were no better disciples in the world than those women. They were surely the best of the chosen company— Mary and the Magdalene. Even the testimonies of Peter and John, the very chief of the apostles, are not sufficiently valued, for they speak of “certain of them which were with us.” I say not they speak disrespectfully; but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. Concerning these godly women they leave an impression on my mind as if they had said, “Women will talk, and these women said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.” It is rehearsed as hearsay of a hearsay: they said that they had seen those who had said. If they had been pushed to the point, the two disciples would not have allowed that the Magdalene and the other women, or Peter, or John, were unworthy of credence; and yet they were by their sadness acting as if the witnesses were mistaken. If those who were at the empty sepulchre were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they themselves detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb; and yet they doubted it. Now, dear friends, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness of God, and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish. At least, I stand here to confess that whenever I doubt my God it is on my part a superfluity of naughtiness. I have never had any reason to distrust him. These many years that I have trusted in him he has never failed me once. Experienced Christians, how can you waver in your confidence? If we disbelieve, is it not folly? If the Saviour does not call us fools, we are forced to call ourselves so.

     We could not suppose that the promise, covenant, and oath of God could fail. The supposition cannot be tolerated for an instant. Thousands of souls are resting everything upon the faithfulness of God, and desire no other security; but if God be unfaithful, what will become of them? If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do? Then they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished; or, even if they be in heaven, what security have they there, if God can change? I feel quite safe on board the ship of the covenant, for all the saints are floating in this one vessel. If God fails, then we all fail together, and there is an end of faith, and hope, and all things. Wherefore, let us not be so foolish as to sin against the light of clear truth. Let us believe what we have known, and tasted, and handled. Let past experience anchor us firmly as to future circumstances.

     Unbelief is folly, because it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry. They said, “Beside all this, this is the third day.” I know that they had expected great things on that third day, and were justified in expecting them; but still, the day was not yet over, and they were in as great a fever as if it was past a month ago. Although the Saviour had said that he would rise on the third day, he had not said that he would appear to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee, and there they should see him; but that meeting had not yet come. “He that believeth shall not make haste;” but they that do not believe are always restless. Well is it written, “Ye have need of patience.” God’s promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled to-day. Divine promises are some of them bills which are payable so many days after sight; and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills. Is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? Because the Lord has not carried out your interpretation of his promise in the way of your own dictation, therefore you question his truthfulness! If the vision tarry, wilt thou nob wait for it? It will come in its own appointed time; wouldst thou have it hurried on for thee? What next? Shall the sun and moon be quickened in their pace to suit thy rashness? Must God himself alter his purposes at thy bidding? Truly, things have come to a pretty pass! Art thou man or God? If thou be a man, wait God’s time, and in thy patience possess thy soul. If thou do not, but, like a fretful child, must have everything now, or else cry and fight, thou deservest the rod, and well may the Lord say to thee, “O foolish one!”

     Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because we make ourselves suffer needlessly. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. I believe that the sharpest griefs in the world are those that men make for themselves. No asp ever stung Cleopatra so terribly as that which she held to her breast herself. Certain of our friends spend all their days in stitching away to make themselves garments of sackcloth. I have seen the cobbler with his lapstone cobbling up a trouble, and he has done his work so well that the shoe has pinched his foot for many a day. It seems a pity, does it not? Yet, brethren and sisters, we have those about us who are great adepts at self-worrying. When you were boys, I do not suppose you ever went into the woods to find a stick for your father to beat you with; but you have done so again and again since you have been men; and the more is the pity that you should be so foolish. If these two travellers had considered and believed, they would have known that Christ was risen from the dead; and as they walked along to Emmaus, if indeed they had ever taken that walk at all, their faces would have brightened at the prospect of soon seeing him they loved so well.

     I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but it was nothing more. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Saviour is full of tenderness, and so freely forgives, that he looks upon our fault as folly, and not as wilful wickedness. He does not take our doubt as an affront, but he calls it folly. He knows that it is true of his children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. He puts that down to childish folly which he might have called by a harsher name. I am sure that any dear, obedient child will feel thankful if his father calls his fault by the lighter name of folly, because it will prove that he loves him, and will endeavour to teach him better. It was not wicked rebellion; there was no enmity in it. They loved their Lord, though they feared he had not risen from the dead. I do not want you to draw undue comfort from this gentle word, but yet I would have you lose none of the cheer it is meant to convey. You that are vexed at your own doubts are not to come to the conclusion that the Lord utterly rejects you. He discriminates between the folly of a child and the wickedness of a rebel: he knows what is in your heart, and knows that you are his. You are like a ship that is well anchored, and though the tide is rushing in, and makes your vessel roll from side to side, so that you yourself stagger, yet the vessel is not loosed from its moorings, neither are you in any danger. Your faith is fixed on Christ, and this anchor holds you; though you are tossed about a little, you will suffer no shipwreck because of sin, but much sea-sickness because of folly. So much concerning unbelieving sadness as folly.

     In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE.

     This is an evil greatly to be fought against, but it is by no means a rare sin among the people of God. Let me try and bring home the charge made by our Lord against the two disciples, since I fear it applies to us as much as to them. Our hearts are full often sluggish in believing; at least, mine is so, and I suppose we are much alike.

     First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for we are much more ready to believe others than to believe him. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are singular things to find in the same person. We cannot help seeing in the daily papers how easily people are duped. Get up a prospectus, and a list of names as directors, including a titled pauper, and you can bring in money by waggon-loads. The confidence trick can still be successfully performed. One impostor lived for months by calling at the door of guileless old people in almshouses, and telling them that a cousin in America had died, and left them a fortune, but it was essential that fees should be paid at the government offices, and then the legacy would at once be handed over. Times and times the money has been scraped together, the rogue has gone his way, and no more has been heard of the cousin in America. There are so many simpletons about that rogues reap harvests all the months of the year. And yet the God of truth is doubted! Yet the incorruptible Word is mistrusted! This makes our slowness of heart in believing God all the more sad a sign of our inward depravity of nature. We can believe, for we believe in man. In the course of our lives we are fools enough to believe in men to our cost; in fact, it is not easy to rise out of this snare: and yet we are slow at heart to believe our God. Oh, my brethren, can we excuse ourselves? The Lord forgive and cleanse us! Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God’s Word as infallible, while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities!

     Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe, since we judge this of others when they are mistrustful? When we see our brethren in trial desponding and distrusting, we are very apt to think them needlessly dull, and sinfully slow to grasp the promise; and yet, if we come into the like case, we are by no means better than they. That which we censure we commit. The beam is in our own eye as well as the mote in our brother’s eye. You have come home from visiting a friend who was distressed at heart, and you have said, “I cannot make her out, I have put the promises before her, but she is so foolish that she refuses to be comforted.” Yes, and from this learn what you may be! Within a month’s time, you may be sinking in the same mire. An evil heart of unbelief is to be found in many a breast where its existence is least suspected. But if we see the folly of others, will we not confess our own? Dare we commit what we condemn? Did you ever say of Job, “It was a pity that after all his patience, he spoke so bitterly, and cursed the day of his birth”? I wonder how many of us would have been any better than Job. I dare not hope that I should have been worthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes. If I had been bereaved as he was, and tortured with like burning boils, and, worst of all, irritated by critics with their cruel candour and malignant sympathy, I could not have behaved so grandly as he did. Let us not severely judge others. They ought to believe, of course; they ought to be more cheerful; they ought not to let their burdens crush them so completely: but when we also are tempted shall we be so very much superior? I fear not. Let us see ourselves in the weakness of our brethren, and confess that the Saviour’s words are true: we are “slow of heart to believe.”

     There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that we do believe, and yet do not believe. We must be very slow of heart when we say “Yes, I believe that promise,” and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled. We are quick of mind to believe mentally, but we are slow of heart to believe practically. The very heart of our believing is slow. Our dear friend, Mr. George Muller, whom may God long preserve, says that one of his objects in journeying about, at his advanced age, from church to church, is to try and lead God’s people to real faith in the promises of God. He says, “As for fifty-seven years I have seen how very little real trust in the living God there is (generally speaking), even amongst true Christians, I have sought, in these my missionary tours particularly, to strengthen their faith; because, in the course of my pastoral labours, the blessed results of real confidence in God on the one hand have come to my knowledge, and the misery of distrusting him on the other.” Mr. Muller’s object is a very desirable one; but what fools we must be that this should be necessary! There are plenty of people who believe God after a superfine kind of fashion up there on the edge of the moon, or “at the back of the north wind”; but they do not believe the Lord in their shops, and on their beds, and in their kitchens: they cannot believe as to bread, and cheese, and house-rent, and raiment. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear. True faith is every-day faith. The faith of the patriarchs was a faith which dwelt in tents, and fed sheep. We want a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith, which trusts in God from hour to hour. Oh, to be delivered from shams, and windbags, and to believe to God as a woman believes her husband, or a child believes its father! I hear of writers of “the realistic school”: we want believers of the realistic order. We need faith in which there are backbone and grit. We are sham believers, and so we lead sham lives. The promises of God speak to us as Jesus spake to his disciples when he rose from the dead: each one cries “Handle me, and see.” God’s words are not chaff, but wheat; not wind, but bread. We are slow of heart because, while we think we are believing all that God saith to us, it often turns out that our believing is all a puff.

     These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching, and they ought to have been solid believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ himself as a tutor, and yet they had not learned the elements of simple faith. “Oh,” say you, “they were very slow!” Are not you the same? How many years have you been with Jesus? Perhaps for even thirty years. He has himself taught you, has he not? Let me remind some of you of the remarkable events of your lives. What wonderful providences you have seen! What singular deliverances you have experienced! What divine upholdings you have enjoyed! What heavenly consolations you have received! If you doubt the Saviour, you may well be called “slow of heart to believe.” After what you have experienced, my brother, the shadow of a doubt should never fall upon you! Have you not said many times, in the flush of your gratitude for some signal favour, “There, I can never doubt my Lord again”? You were foolish when you made that boastful observation; but you are more foolish still for running back from it. You have passed through the Red Sea, and with your timbrel in your hand you have sung unto the Lord; and yet, perhaps, after a short march, you have tasted the bitter waters of Marah, and opened your mouth in murmuring. God only is wise, and we are fools. He alone hath understanding, and we are “slow of heart.”

     Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe, because there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them. See how the Saviour puts it— “Slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” What a mighty “all” that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? Are you as familiar with your Bibles as you should be? If so, you will join with me in speaking of Scripture as having almost a redundance of confirmatory testimony. There is rock enough here for us to build upon. We have here, not only precept upon precept, but promise upon promise, and all these confirmed by pledge, and oath, and covenant of the Lord God Almighty. The teaching of Scripture is so full, so varied, so convincing, that we are, indeed, slow of heart if our faith is not firm and immovable. Brethren, a want of familiarity with the Word of God is very often the seed-plot of our doubts! Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible. Our spirits sink for want of the heavenly food stored up in the inspired Volume. God forbid that you should fly to light literature to give your mind a fillip! Go to the solid literature of the promises, and be established with food more suitable for an immortal soul. Like Luther, say, “Come, let us sing a psalm, and drive away the devil.” There is no enchantment for the casting out of evil spirits like a resort to the divine Word. When you see more of what God has revealed, you will rise out of your doubts and fears, and your slowness of heart to believe will depart from you.

     Before I leave this point, I beg you to notice that the Saviour does not say that they were “hard of heart,” but “slow of heart.” I like to notice that. When he is most severe, he is still tenderly discriminating. “Slow of heart” we are, but there is no enmity in our heart towards him. It is slowness, and that is bad enough, but our Lord graciously helps our pace. Our face is in the right direction, and our feet are going the right way; but we are slow in heart, and lame in faith. As David spared Mephibosheth, and admitted him to his table, though lame in both his feet, so the Lord loves us, and communes with us, slow of heart though we are. It is bad to have a slow heart, very bad; but it would be much worse to have an unrenewed heart. With all our doubts and fears, we have no longer a heart of stone, but we have a heart of flesh, which mourns because of its sinful unbelief. The Lord knows the difference between the sin of hating the truth and the folly of doubting it. Strive against this slowness of heart, but still let not Satan come in as an accuser, and condemn you as though you were not a child of God at all.

     So there I leave it. There is the Master’s gentle rebuke, not meant to discourage you, but to encourage you. He calls you foolish in order that you may be so no longer. Believe, and this shall be your wisdom.

     Will the Lord’s people kindly pray for me while I now speak to the unconverted? Ask that I may have God-speed while I try and speak to those who are seeking the Lord, and have not yet believed in him. I want to say to them just this: “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe!” Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe, though you long to believe. You are not like the spider, whose motto is, “I get everything out of myself.” You do not hope to spin salvation out of your own bowels, but you own that salvation must be through faith in Christ. So far so good: but how is it that you do not at once believe? You say you cannot. How is it that you cannot believe in Jesus? He commands you to believe in him, and promises that you shall be saved. Trust him, and you shall live as surely as his Word is true.

     Listen! This unbelief proves you to be foolish, and slow of heart, for there are other parts of his Word which you easily believe. If there is a threatening or a condemnation, you believe it. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come, you believe it. You have a quick eye for anything which reads hard and looks dismal. Have I not seen you reading the Word, and stopping at a passage, and saying, “Alas! this makes my case hopeless. I have sinned the sin that is unto death”? You believe in more than God has said, for you read your own thoughts into God’s Word, and make it say more than it means. You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threatenings, and if you believe the one, believe the other. Certainly, the cheering words come from the same inspiration as the depressing ones: if you believe that which looks dark, believe that which looks bright.

     Next, you are very foolish, because your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile. I should think I have heard hundreds of them in my time, but out of all the objections raised by troubled souls against believing in Jesus, there is not one worthy of serious discussion. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough; as if that affected Christ’s power to save. If he felt more humbled, then he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in himself, and trusting in his own humility instead of trusting in Christ? One man cannot believe in Christ because he is not like a certain great saint. Does he expect that he is to be like a great saint when he first comes to Christ? Has not Christ come to save sinners? Another says he cannot believe because he has not felt the terrors of the law and the dread of hell. Does he think that his terrors are to save him? Would his dreads and horrors help Christ to save him? Would he not be trusting his terrors, and not Christ? The Lord Jesus says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” The gospel is to be preached to every creature, and every creature that believes it shall be saved: but these people back out of it, and begin hammering out reasons for their own destruction. A sadly suicidal business this! Let the devil invent reasons for my not being saved: it is not a business which can bring me any form of good. Nothing can stand against the promise of God: he commands me to believe on his Son Jesus, and I do believe, and I am saved, and shall be saved, despite all the objections which may be raised by carnal reason.

     Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, you have found it very easy to believe in yourself. Not long ago you were everybody, and now you cannot believe that Christ is everybody. You thought you were very good; you were wonderfully easy in your own mind when you ought to have been afraid. What! Was it easy to believe your poor self, and can you not believe the faithful word of a good and gracious Saviour who says that if you trust him you shall be saved?

     Moreover, you are very apt now to believe Satan if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the grace of God cannot save you. Of course, you believe the father of lies, and you go mourning and moping, when you might at once go singing and dancing if you would believe your Saviour. Jesus bids you trust and live, and Satan says it is of no use your trusting; you believe Satan, and treat your Lord as if he had intended to deceive you. “O fools, and slow of heart!”

     Then you know how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ. If you hear a sermon and get a little melted, and go home and pray a bit, you get quite easy and say, “Now I am on the road.” Why, your meltings and your prayings are not the road to heaven: Jesus says, “I am the way.” You are not on the way till you get to him. You have been in gracious company, and singing holy hymns; you feel quite good, and are highly pleased with yourselves. What right have you to be restful even for a moment? How dare you linger till you have reached the city of refuge, which is Jesus Christ? Till you believe in Christ you have no right to a single moment’s peace, or hope, or joy; and yet you do get a sort of peace and a kind of hope, which are only sparks of your own kindling which will die out in blackness. Because you are content to trust in something short of Christ, I say to you— Why not rest in Jesus? O fools, and slow of heart! Refuges of lies you fly to, but the true refuge of the finished work of Jesus Christ you do not accept? Why is this?

     And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because you make such foolish demands upon God. You would believe if you could hear a voice, if you could dream a dream, if some strange thing were to happen in your family. What! Is God to be tied to your fancies, that you will not believe him unless he does this and that extravagant thing? If he chooses to bring some to himself by extraordinary means, must he do the same with you, or else you prefer to be cast into hell? Surely you are mad. Who are you that you are to dictate to the Lord, and say he shall do this, or that, or else you will refuse to believe him? And so you will trample on the blood of Jesus, and turn your back upon the kingdom of heaven, unless an angel is sent to you, or you hear a voice from heaven! O fools, and slow of heart, to make these irrational demands upon the ever-blessed God!

     You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, you ignore the Word of God and its suitability to your case. If a soul in distress will take down the Bible, and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Does not that fit you? “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Does not that fit you? “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Does not that apply to you? Why, if you will but look through the Word, you shall find passages so pertinent to your condition that, as a key fits a lock, they will seem made for you! Those two disciples did not, for a while, see how the prophets met the case of the crucified and risen Christ; but as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see how God has provided for your condition in his Word, in his covenant, in his Son, your sadness will flee away.

     I close with this one word of warning to those of you who are distressed in heart, and are falling into the habit of looking for reasons why you should not believe in Christ. I do pray you to leave off this silly practice. Before this evil becomes chronic with you, quit it as a deadly thing. People can reason themselves down, but they cannot reason themselves up again. If thou seest a door open, in God’s name hasten in, for one of these days thou mayest be so blind as never to see an open door again. Seize this opportunity, and while Christ stands and says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” come along with you. If you sit down to argue against Christ, he may allow your conclusions to stand to your own destruction. Those who are so foolish as to find twenty unhallowed reasons to-day will be foolish enough to find two hundred such reasons next year. A man may act the cripple till he grows hopelessly lame. Mind what you are at. You may lock a door, and open it again for many a year; but one of these days you may so hamper the lock that it will not open again. Oh, that you may at once believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

     I have come to this pass myself— if I perish, I will perish believing in Jesus. If I must be lost, I will be lost clinging to his cross. Can any man be lost there? No, “fools and slow of heart” though we may be, we know that none shall perish who come to Christ, for that would greatly dishonour the Saviour’s name. God bless you! Amen.