

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

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PKBedwell@hotmail.com

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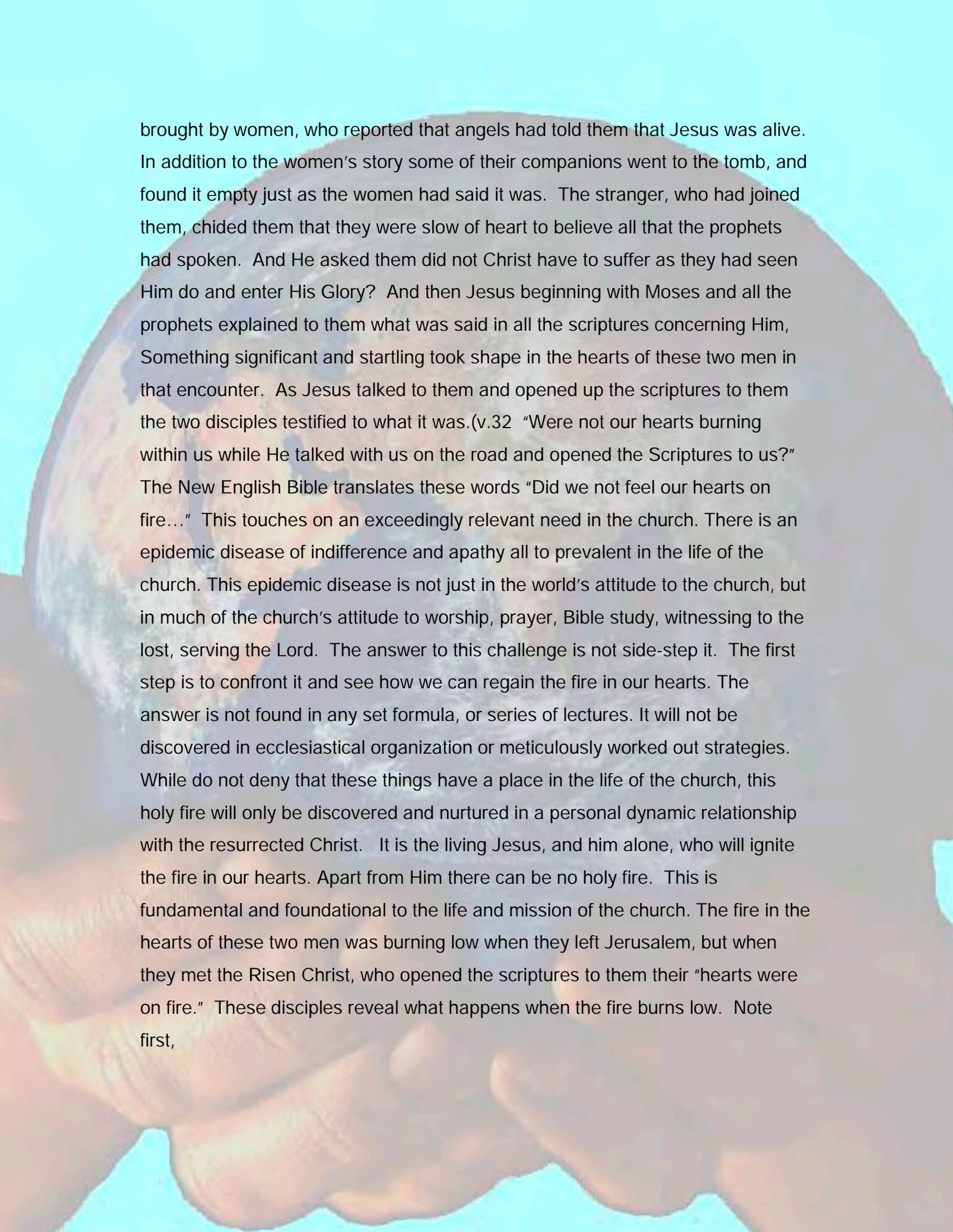
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RESURRECTION FIRE

Scripture Reading -- Luke 24:13- 35. Text Luke 24:32.

Introduction

Two lonely and sad disciples trudged wearily home from Jerusalem to Emmaus, about 7 miles outside of Jerusalem. The main topic of their conversation was the tragic events which took place on the hill of Calvary a few days before. As they discussed the events which had taken place, a stranger, whom they did not recognize joined them. They told Him how they had seen their Lord and their Master taken and mutilated by the hands of wicked men. His hands and feet were transfixed by nails to a Cross and a crown of thorns pressed into his brow. A spear had been plunged into His side to make sure He was dead. His body hung limp and bloody on the Roman Cross. We all know how the carefully and tenderly He was taken down, and placed in a borrowed tomb. Then a stone was rolled against the opening of the grave to protect the body. The Roman authorities sealed the tomb with a Roman seal, telling them to make the tomb as sure and safe as they could. Then three days later they heard the startling news



brought by women, who reported that angels had told them that Jesus was alive. In addition to the women's story some of their companions went to the tomb, and found it empty just as the women had said it was. The stranger, who had joined them, chided them that they were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. And He asked them did not Christ have to suffer as they had seen Him do and enter His Glory? And then Jesus beginning with Moses and all the prophets explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning Him, Something significant and startling took shape in the hearts of these two men in that encounter. As Jesus talked to them and opened up the scriptures to them the two disciples testified to what it was.(v.32 "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" The New English Bible translates these words "Did we not feel our hearts on fire..." This touches on an exceedingly relevant need in the church. There is an epidemic disease of indifference and apathy all too prevalent in the life of the church. This epidemic disease is not just in the world's attitude to the church, but in much of the church's attitude to worship, prayer, Bible study, witnessing to the lost, serving the Lord. The answer to this challenge is not side-step it. The first step is to confront it and see how we can regain the fire in our hearts. The answer is not found in any set formula, or series of lectures. It will not be discovered in ecclesiastical organization or meticulously worked out strategies. While do not deny that these things have a place in the life of the church, this holy fire will only be discovered and nurtured in a personal dynamic relationship with the resurrected Christ. It is the living Jesus, and him alone, who will ignite the fire in our hearts. Apart from Him there can be no holy fire. This is fundamental and foundational to the life and mission of the church. The fire in the hearts of these two men was burning low when they left Jerusalem, but when they met the Risen Christ, who opened the scriptures to them their "hearts were on fire." These disciples reveal what happens when the fire burns low. Note first,

1. THE SIGNS OF PESSIMISM WHEN THE FIRE BURNS FEEBLY. Luke

24:19-24. These two disciples were beaten and battered emotionally. They grieved deeply over the loss of their Lord and Master. When Jesus drew near to them he asked in verses 21-24 "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They described how Jesus, a man in whom they had pinned their hopes and aspirations as the promised Messiah, had been crucified and sealed in a tomb. They had seen Him humiliated, degraded, crucified, slain and buried in a tomb like any other man. After all, is not the sealed tomb the final blow to hope? It is true they had heard He was alive, but obviously they didn't believe it. Then they decided to set out for home and try and make sense of the bewildering events, that had taken place, and at the same time, try to put the pieces of their shattered lives together again. The fire was burning low. Why did the fire burn low? It burned low because,

a. Doubt Invaded their Hearts. Luke 24:21-24. They still believed that Jesus "was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. **BUT**, they said, that word **BUT** always changes the meaning of things. **BUT** we had hoped that He was going to redeem Israel." Faith had not been completely destroyed because they admitted that He was prophet powerful in word but now He was dead. They observed two traits about Him and His ministry,

i. He Was Powerful in Word. Luke 24:19. They were convinced of this. The crowds had listened with rapt attention to the dynamic truths of His matchless teaching. They had marveled at the impact of His powerful and majestic words. "Never man spake like this man, for He speaks as one having authority. Not as the scribes and Pharisees. He was powerful in Word. The religious leaders taught the law. They taught what they had heard and learned, but Jesus spoke as one having authority, because He spoke from the authority of His person. He spoke with power of His deity. He was powerful in word. They also said,

ii. **He was Mighty in His deeds. Luke 24:19.** They obviously had seen Him in action, and if they had not seen everything He had done, they had at least heard about it, and were aware of His mighty deeds. His deeds were mighty and powerful and He was the talk of Palestine. It was told that He was able stand up in a little boat battered by the fury of angry storm, to confront and defy the raging elements of that storm and with a simple command of authority bring calmness and tranquility to the sea. "Why" they said, "even the winds and the waves obey Him." His strong gentle hands touched the blind, the lame and the sick and made them whole again. He had confronted and defied the demonic domains of death and brushed them aside as though were frazzled feathers, and reached into the deep darkness of eternity to pluck Lazarus from the dead. He was, indeed, a prophet powerful in word and mighty in His deeds. All of what they had seen convinced them that He was the promised Messiah, and it inspired their faith and ignited the living flame of hope in their hearts that He was indeed the one who would redeem Israel. V. 21. He was powerful in word and mighty in His deeds. But pessimism set in. He is dead now, they said... He was a prophet that is true. To be a prophet is one thing, but to be a redeemer is entirely different matter. A prophet has distinct limitations. If it be true that Jesus was simply a prophet, and a dead one at that, then salvation is simply a pipedream. How then can He be the promised Messiah?" **It was not that belief in Jesus had been destroyed, but it was what they believed ABOUT Jesus that had changed.** There was a doubt as to who He was. Their faith had been reduced from who Jesus who was, the Divinely anointed Messiah, the God-Man, to a prophet who was like any other man and now He was dead. If this be true then the question arises - how can deliver me from my sin, if sin mastered Him? How can He give me life, if death had conquered Him? How can there be hope beyond the grave, if the tomb had held Him in its deadly clutches? It would simply have meant that his death was a disastrous and tragic end to a good and sinless life. Man would have to start afresh and look for a redeemer elsewhere now. They said that He was "prophet powerful in word and mighty in His deeds," but He was simply a prophet and had

gone the way of all men. Doubt had invaded their hearts. The outcome of this doubt was that,

b. Despair had Invaded their Hearts. Luke 24; 19-24. Doubt bears the fruit of despair. This Despair was evident not only by what they said, but by what they did. It was clear that something had burned in their hearts before the dark event that took place at Calvary. Their despair was manifested in two ways. First,

i. By what they said. Luke 24:21. They had hoped that He was the Messiah, the promised redeemer. We had hoped. The ashes of their hope lay scattered at the foot of the Cross and buried in borrowed tomb. Note the past tense. "He meant to redeem Israel – He tried but failed. They still loved Him and they spoke well of Him. He was a good and loving man. He was a prophet, powerful in word and mighty in His deeds. But there were things to which He was not equal." (Morgan) That is what they thought. Now He is dead and we have lost our hope. The second way in which their despair was manifested was,

ii. By what they did. Luke 24:21. They left Jerusalem. They felt there was no reason any longer to stay in Jerusalem. The fire had been extinguished in their hearts and so they left Jerusalem. "Let us leave the place of death – the place of a sealed tomb – the place of crushed hopes" and they set out for Emmaus. Here were the signs of pessimism when the fire burned feebly. But on their way back to Emmaus, a stranger joined them in the way, and began to open the scriptures to them, and as He did so their "hearts were on fire." That meeting with Jesus changed their lives. The change in their lives was miraculous. In that encounter Jesus revealed,

2. THE SECRET OF PASSION WHEN THE FIRE BURNS INTENSELY. Luke 24:32. In verse 32 lies the secret of re-igniting the fire. When Jesus drew near there was a change of attitude. Jesus made sense of their confusing situation. The two men asked each other "Were not our hearts burning within us, while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" The secret of rekindling the fire in the heart lies in three fundamental factors. They constitute

the secret of a passion for God. The first is vitally important. For the fire to be re-ignited their must be,

a. Openness to the Divine Voice. Luke 24:32. They were receptive to what He had to say. Note what they said, "Our hearts burned within us while He talked within us on the way." He spoke! and they listened. He spoke! and they were open to His voice. He spoke and the fire burned! Their hearts did not burn within them while they talked to Him, nor while they talked about Him. Not in questioning Him, was the fire rekindled. Nor in the pouring out of their troubles and complaints did the fire burn. (Morgan) The fire began to burn when they stopped talking and started listening to what He had to say. It was when He was communicating with them that the fire began to burn in their hearts. It was while they opened their hearts to listen to His words that their hearts burned within them.

This is an important truth to learn. How easy it is to talk to the Lord and even easier to talk about Him the more difficult task is to allow Him to speak to us. The nature of our modern cultural mindset and lifestyle does not place importance on waiting and listening. The word says counsels us to "be still and know that I am God." It is vital that in our relationship with the Lord that we wait for Him and wait on Him with an unreserved openness, so as to allow Him to speak to us. Prayer is more than us speaking to Him. It is allowing Him to speak to us. It is when He communicates with us that the fire begins to glow. Martin Luther said, "If I neglected prayer in a single day, I should lose the fire of faith."

We are living in a busy world in which it is difficult to take time to spend in the presence of God. But it is not impossible. The great need in the Christian community is to establish genuine scriptural praying as a priority. As Christians if we are too busy to take time to listen to God, then our priorities are turned upside down and we are too busy. Let me remind you that your soul is worth more than gaining the whole world. It would be tragic and unnecessary, to lose your soul in the interest of gaining the world and being too busy to quietly spend

time in His presence world with an open heart and receptive mind. Busyness so often gives rise to prayerlessness and prayerlessness bears the fruit of apathy. So many are like Martha in the New Testament, busy preparing a meal for Jesus, while Mary sat quietly at the feet of Jesus listening to His life giving words. And Jesus pointed out significantly what He considered to be a priority, for He said to Martha, "Martha Martha you are busy about many things, but Mary has chosen the better way. It was not that what Martha was doing was unimportant, but Jesus did not consider it to be a priority. It is at the feet of Jesus listening to His voice that the fire will be kindled and a passion for Him ignited. There must be openness to the voice of Jesus, if the fire is going to continue to burn. It was while Jesus talked to these two men that the fire burned. The second ingredient in cultivating the fire is,

b. Closeness to the Divine Presence. Luke 24:15, 32. "Jesus, Himself, came up and walked along with them.... And "He opened the scriptures to them." The K.J.V. says that "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." The scriptures lead to the glory of Christ and sense of His presence. The fire was re-kindled when Jesus walked with them and they walked with Him. I suggest to you that that there hearts were set on fire because of their closeness to the presence of Jesus. In the midst of their darkness Jesus came. Here were two men despondent, discouraged and in despair, and Jesus came near and they said it was while "He talked within us that their hearts burned within them." Openness to the voice of Jesus is closely linked to the closeness of His presence. For openness to the voice of Jesus is most certainly the gateway to the closeness of His presence. One of the basic reasons the fire goes out, is because we lose our close relationship with the presence of Christ. It was Charles Wesley who prayed in one of his great hymns, "Still let me guard the holy fire." The way to guard the "holy fire" in your soul is to protect and nurture an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. When we lack the abiding presence of God and the consciousness of His Holy Spirit, we lack fire in the heart. Tozer wrote, "the

world is perishing for lack of the knowledge of God, and the church is famishing for want of His Presence." It is His Presence that kindles the fire. But in cultivating the inward fire there must also be,

c. Receptiveness to the Divine Word. Luke 24:32. "Were not our hearts burning within us, while He talked with us on the road and opened the scripture to us."

Now Jesus uses the scriptures to do three things. First,

i. To reprove them for their doubts. Luke 24:25. Jesus said to them, "how foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His Glory." He also used the scriptures ,

ii. To remove their doubts and fears. Luke 24:26-27. thirdly,

iii. To re-kindle the fire in their hearts. Luke 24:32.

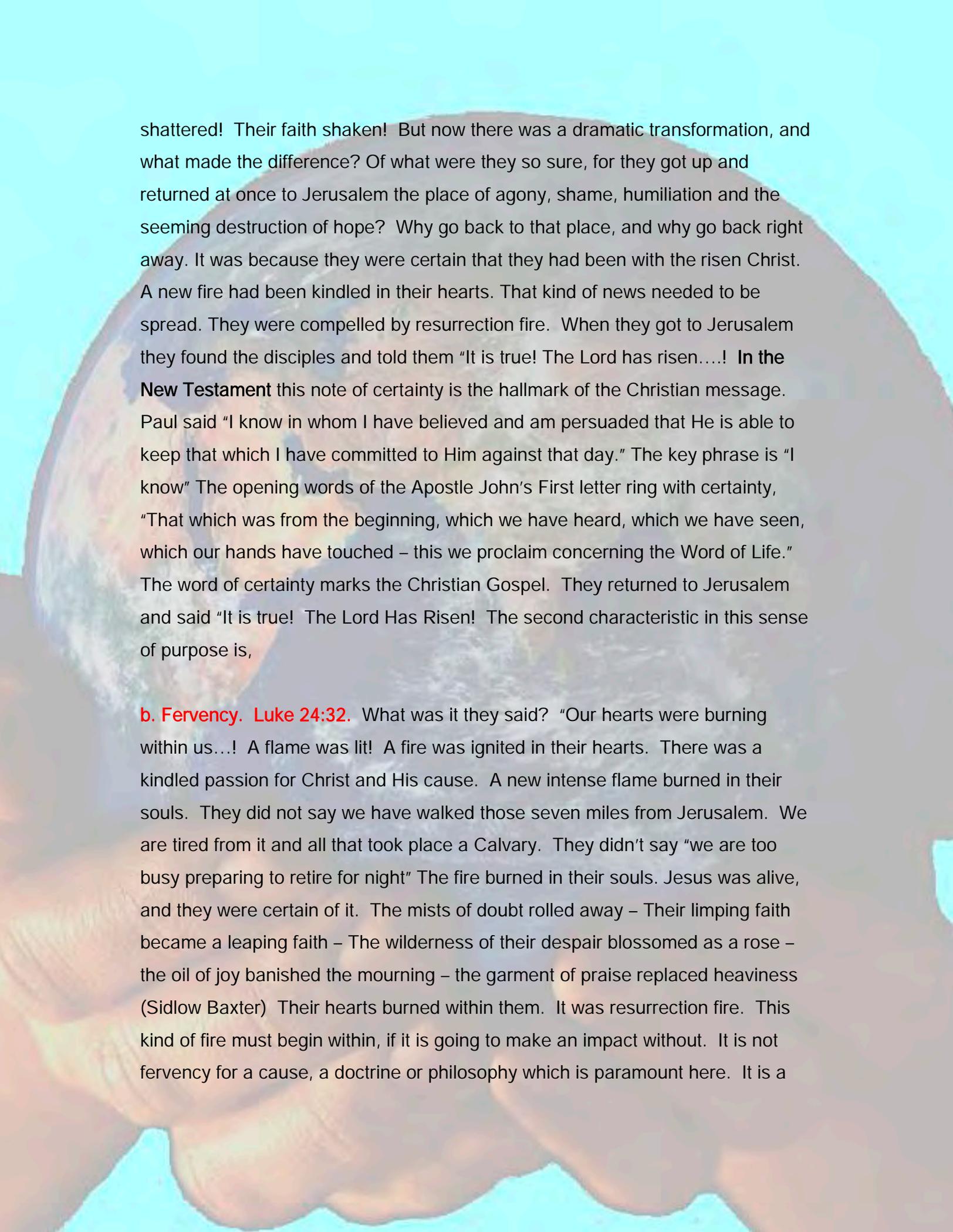
He then opened the scriptures to them in verse 32. The scriptures are dynamic. In them is life and power. The scriptures are vital to keeping the fire burning in our hearts. Jesus on one occasion said, "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." What a tragedy that in much of the modern church there is such ignorance of the scriptures. J.H. Smith wrote that if all the Christians would dust their Bible at the same time, we would have the greatest dust storm in our history." One may dispute his comment but one thing is certain, ignorance of the scriptures is one reason why fire burns low. So many are enamored by the latest books which propound the newest religious fad. So often the prevalent desire in the church is to discuss a book about the **Book**. Do not misunderstand me there is profit to studying a good book on the scriptures, but 'NOT" to the exclusion of **the Book, the Word of God**. John Wesley said he was a "man of one book." It was not that he excluded any other books. John Wesley was a well versed man and wrote and read many books. But the Bible was a priority in his

ministry and central in his life. The challenge of the hour in these uncertain days is that we study the Word of God with greater care and intensity, in order to allow it to saturate our souls and fill our minds with the truth of God. One lady said after studying the life of Moses; "I now know Moses so well he doesn't even look like Charlton Heston." Hollywood should not interpret or determine the facts and truths of the scriptures for us. We discover truth as we study and are open and receptive to the message of the Word of God itself. Scriptural truth is the fuel of spiritual fire. It is clear, however, that the Bible is not popular in our day. There is even a measure of disinterest in the church. Vance Havner said we have moved in our day from burning hearts to itching ears. We live in a day of fulfilled prophecy when we do not put up with sound doctrine. But the choice is before us. Do we want the fire? Are we willing to pay the price of receiving it? If we as Christians are going to keep the inward fire burning, we must feed it with the Word of God. God's word fuels the fire. The hearts of these men "burned within them as He opened the scriptures to them." These words are the secret of passion when the fire burns intensely. Finally,

3. THE SENSE OF PURPOSE EVIDENT WHEN THE FIRE BURNS

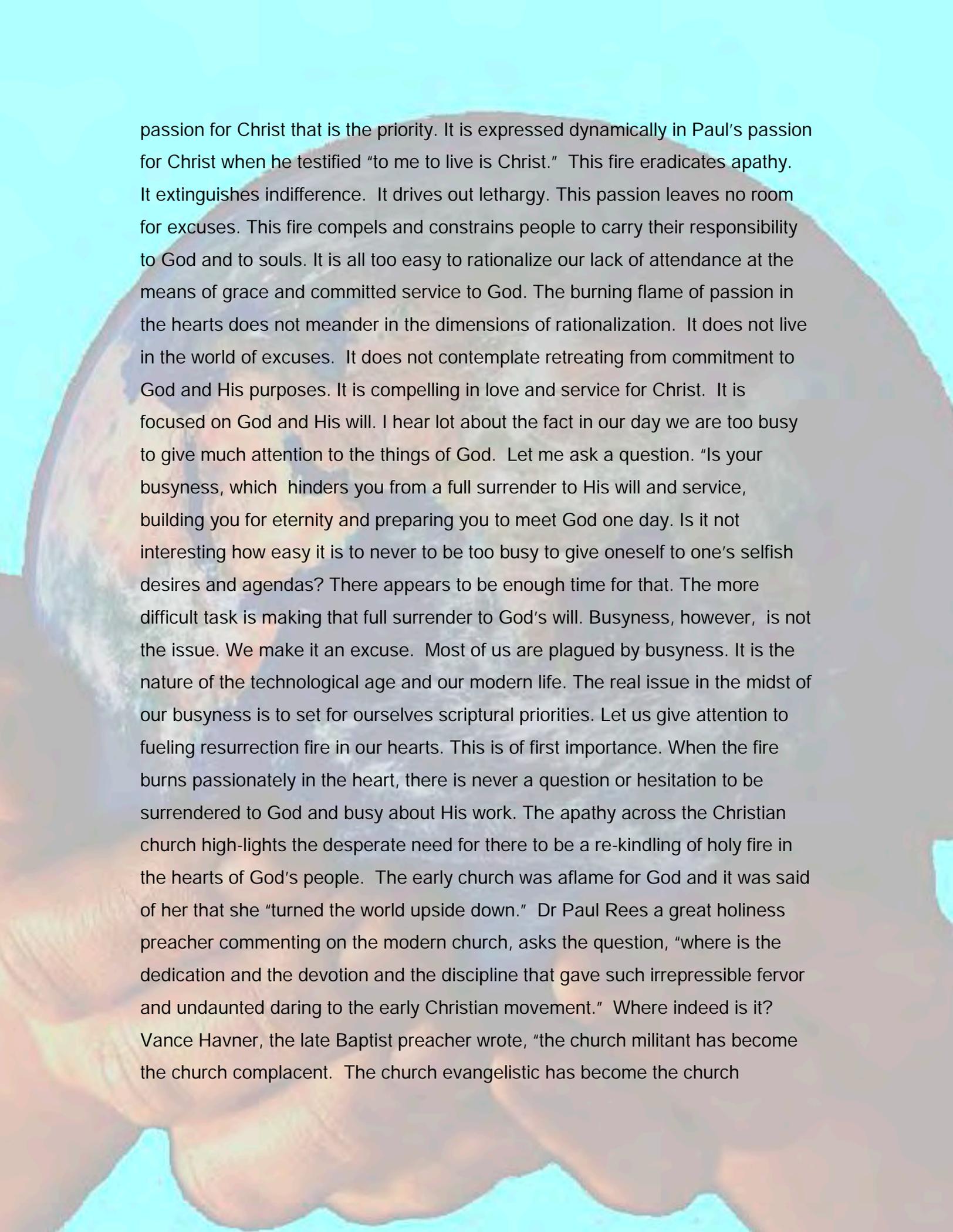
VIGOROUSLY. Luke 24:32-35. "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us and opened the Scriptures to us . . . v. 33. They returned at once to Jerusalem." The change in their demeanor was dramatic. They returned at once. The King James says that they returned at "the same hour." This is what happens when God's people catch the fire. There were no excuses made or rationalizations given for not returning to Jerusalem. This is resurrection fire and passion. This is the way of the burning heart. There are some obvious characteristics that are a part of the way of the burning heart. The first is,

a. Certainty. Luke 24:34. "Of what were they so sure?" Their walk from Jerusalem was marked by despair, confusion and uncertainty. They had felt like the bottom had dropped out of their lives. Their dreams smashed! Their hopes

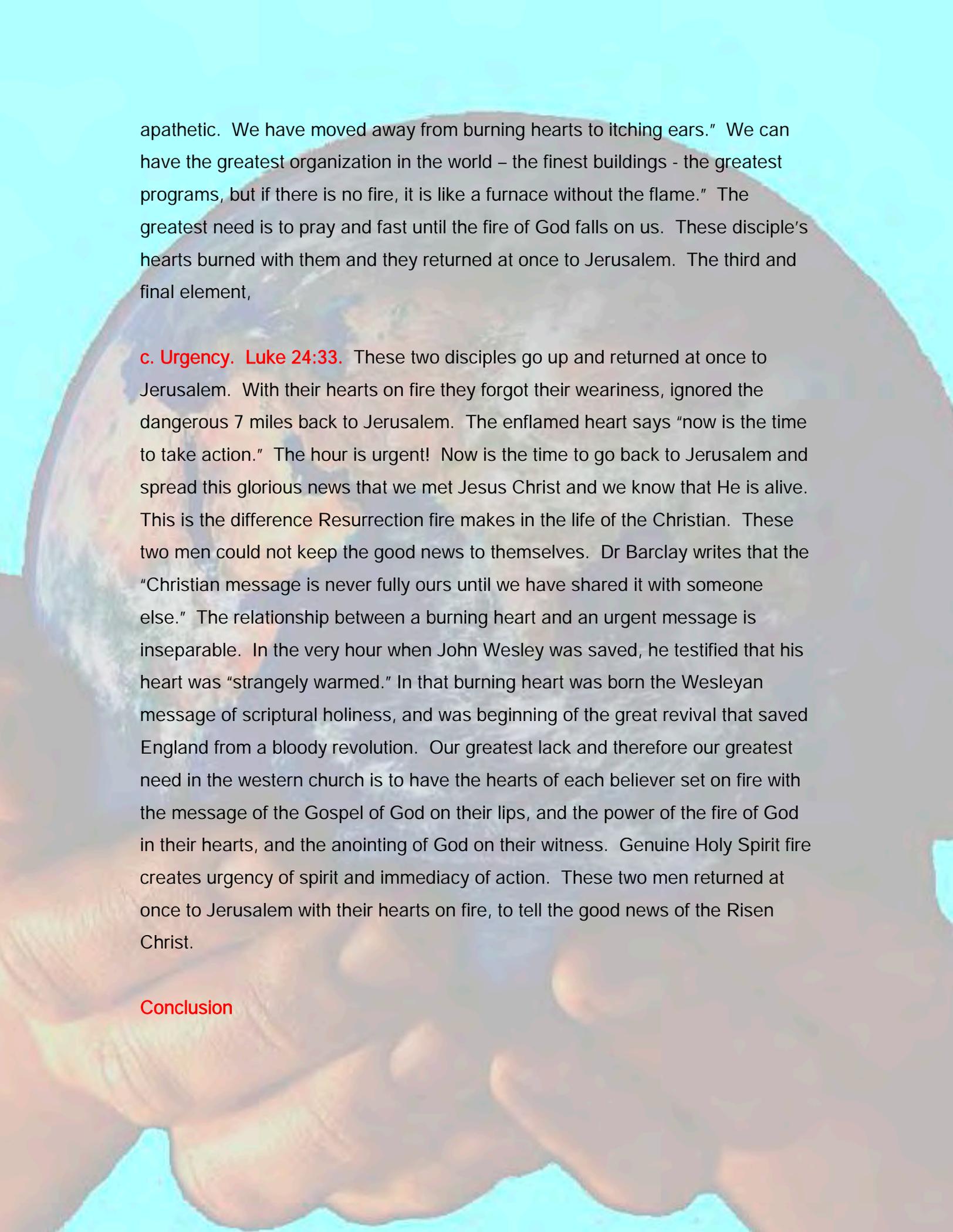


shattered! Their faith shaken! But now there was a dramatic transformation, and what made the difference? Of what were they so sure, for they got up and returned at once to Jerusalem the place of agony, shame, humiliation and the seeming destruction of hope? Why go back to that place, and why go back right away. It was because they were certain that they had been with the risen Christ. A new fire had been kindled in their hearts. That kind of news needed to be spread. They were compelled by resurrection fire. When they got to Jerusalem they found the disciples and told them "It is true! The Lord has risen....! **In the New Testament** this note of certainty is the hallmark of the Christian message. Paul said "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." The key phrase is "I know" The opening words of the Apostle John's First letter ring with certainty, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, which our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life." The word of certainty marks the Christian Gospel. They returned to Jerusalem and said "It is true! The Lord Has Risen! The second characteristic in this sense of purpose is,

b. Fervency. Luke 24:32. What was it they said? "Our hearts were burning within us...! A flame was lit! A fire was ignited in their hearts. There was a kindled passion for Christ and His cause. A new intense flame burned in their souls. They did not say we have walked those seven miles from Jerusalem. We are tired from it and all that took place a Calvary. They didn't say "we are too busy preparing to retire for night" The fire burned in their souls. Jesus was alive, and they were certain of it. The mists of doubt rolled away – Their limping faith became a leaping faith – The wilderness of their despair blossomed as a rose – the oil of joy banished the mourning – the garment of praise replaced heaviness (Sidlow Baxter) Their hearts burned within them. It was resurrection fire. This kind of fire must begin within, if it is going to make an impact without. It is not fervency for a cause, a doctrine or philosophy which is paramount here. It is a



passion for Christ that is the priority. It is expressed dynamically in Paul's passion for Christ when he testified "to me to live is Christ." This fire eradicates apathy. It extinguishes indifference. It drives out lethargy. This passion leaves no room for excuses. This fire compels and constrains people to carry their responsibility to God and to souls. It is all too easy to rationalize our lack of attendance at the means of grace and committed service to God. The burning flame of passion in the hearts does not meander in the dimensions of rationalization. It does not live in the world of excuses. It does not contemplate retreating from commitment to God and His purposes. It is compelling in love and service for Christ. It is focused on God and His will. I hear a lot about the fact in our day we are too busy to give much attention to the things of God. Let me ask a question. "Is your busyness, which hinders you from a full surrender to His will and service, building you for eternity and preparing you to meet God one day. Is it not interesting how easy it is to never be too busy to give oneself to one's selfish desires and agendas? There appears to be enough time for that. The more difficult task is making that full surrender to God's will. Busyness, however, is not the issue. We make it an excuse. Most of us are plagued by busyness. It is the nature of the technological age and our modern life. The real issue in the midst of our busyness is to set for ourselves scriptural priorities. Let us give attention to fueling resurrection fire in our hearts. This is of first importance. When the fire burns passionately in the heart, there is never a question or hesitation to be surrendered to God and busy about His work. The apathy across the Christian church highlights the desperate need for there to be a re-kindling of holy fire in the hearts of God's people. The early church was aflame for God and it was said of her that she "turned the world upside down." Dr Paul Rees a great holiness preacher commenting on the modern church, asks the question, "where is the dedication and the devotion and the discipline that gave such irrepressible fervor and undaunted daring to the early Christian movement." Where indeed is it? Vance Havner, the late Baptist preacher wrote, "the church militant has become the church complacent. The church evangelistic has become the church



apathetic. We have moved away from burning hearts to itching ears." We can have the greatest organization in the world – the finest buildings - the greatest programs, but if there is no fire, it is like a furnace without the flame." The greatest need is to pray and fast until the fire of God falls on us. These disciple's hearts burned with them and they returned at once to Jerusalem. The third and final element,

c. Urgency. Luke 24:33. These two disciples go up and returned at once to Jerusalem. With their hearts on fire they forgot their weariness, ignored the dangerous 7 miles back to Jerusalem. The enflamed heart says "now is the time to take action." The hour is urgent! Now is the time to go back to Jerusalem and spread this glorious news that we met Jesus Christ and we know that He is alive. This is the difference Resurrection fire makes in the life of the Christian. These two men could not keep the good news to themselves. Dr Barclay writes that the "Christian message is never fully ours until we have shared it with someone else." The relationship between a burning heart and an urgent message is inseparable. In the very hour when John Wesley was saved, he testified that his heart was "strangely warmed." In that burning heart was born the Wesleyan message of scriptural holiness, and was beginning of the great revival that saved England from a bloody revolution. Our greatest lack and therefore our greatest need in the western church is to have the hearts of each believer set on fire with the message of the Gospel of God on their lips, and the power of the fire of God in their hearts, and the anointing of God on their witness. Genuine Holy Spirit fire creates urgency of spirit and immediacy of action. These two men returned at once to Jerusalem with their hearts on fire, to tell the good news of the Risen Christ.

Conclusion



General Booth the founder of the Salvation Army wrote a great hymn recognizing the deep need of the fire of God in each Child of God. It is a powerful and intense prayer.

'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead. The fire will meet our every need.

Send the fire.

For strength to ever do the right, for grace to conquer in the fight, for power to walk the world in white,

Send the fire.

To make our weak hearts strong and brave,

Send the fire.

To live a dying world to save,

Send the fire.

Oh see us on Thy altar, lay our lives, our all this very day, crown the offering now we pray, send the fire.

May that be our constant prayer.