

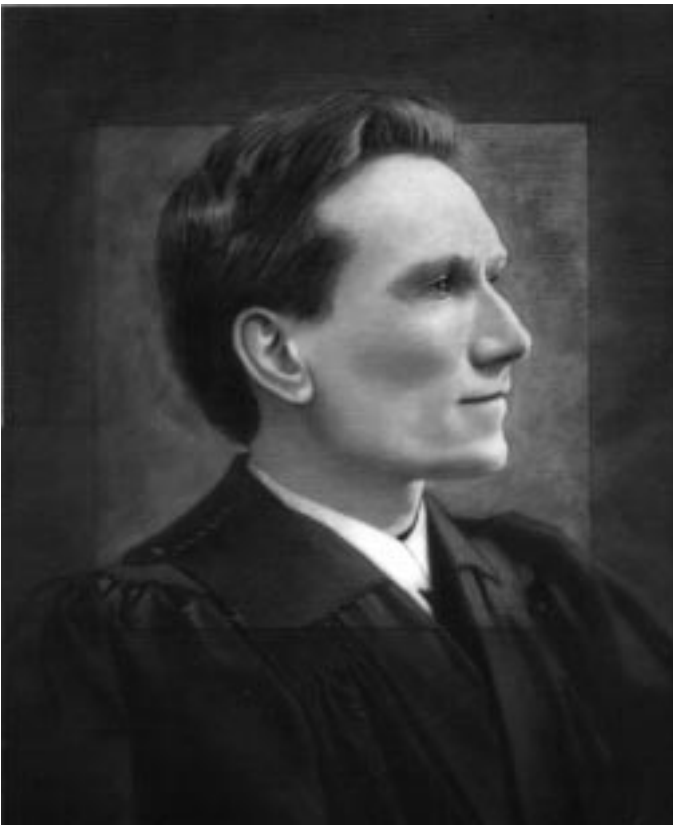
“Paul’s whole soul and mind and heart were taken up with what Jesus Christ came to do; he never lost sight of that one thing.”

“I MADE MYSELF SERVANT UNTO ALL...THAT I MAY BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME”
1 COR. 9:19, 22



Be still.

Oswald Chambers - The Surrendered Life



Oswald Chambers was a man unbridled by the world and its desires. Some say he was one of the greatest Christian thinkers of our time. He would say if any credit is given, let it go to Jesus Christ, his Lord and Saviour. Much like the apostle Paul, life for Oswald Chambers was but an open opportunity to glorify God.

He was born on July 24, 1874 in Aberdeen Scotland, where he became a Christian during his teen years under the ministry of Charles Spurgeon. God used many things to shape and mould Chambers, one of which was

his acceptance into the University of Edinburgh. Rapid spiritual development followed as Chambers became intently interested in the things of God. After answering God’s call into the ministry, he studied theology at Dunoon College. From 1906-10, he conducted itinerant Bible-teaching ministries in the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan. Upon his return home, he married Gertrude Hobbs. In 1911, he founded and was named principal of the Bible Training College in Clapham, London. The school closed in 1915 due to World War I. Chambers was then commissioned by YMCA to go to Zeitoun, Egypt, where he ministered to Australian and New Zealand troops.

Many of Chambers’ devotional lectures make up a large portion of *My Utmost For His Highest*, now considered a classic and his best-known book. His death, the result of a ruptured appendix in 1917, came as a shock to all who knew him. He had often told friends: “I feel I shall be buried for a time, hidden away in obscurity; then suddenly I shall flame out, do my work, and be gone.”

After his death, a fellow worker remarked: “It is a mighty thing to see even once in a lifetime a man the self-expression of whose being is the Redemption of Jesus Christ manifested in daily hourly living. He would have [simply] called himself ‘A believer in Jesus.’” The fact is, God made this man “a refuge from the storm” for many downcast souls. Through his written words, God continues to touch and change lives for Christ’s sake.

THROUGH TRIAL GOD BRIGHTENS THE FLAME

However, there was a time when answering God’s call seemed difficult and painful. For several years, poverty and spiritual loneliness clouded his life. Then came the breakthrough. God had used a wilderness experience to “bring him to the end of himself.”

He became keenly aware of his utter worthlessness. He found his only worth to be that which God had given him in Christ.

There arose within Oswald Chambers’ life a deep desire to abandon all for Christ’s sake. He writes, “A sanctified soul may be an artist, or a musician [anyone]; but he is not a sanctified artist or musician: he is one who expresses the message of God through a particular medium. As long as the artist or musician imagines he can consecrate his artistic gifts to God, he is deluded. Abandonment of ourselves is the kernel of consecration, not presenting our gifts, but presenting ourselves without reserve [to Christ].” “Sooner or later God makes each of us aware of the areas in our lives

where “self interest” abides. These are the areas He comes to touch and demand complete surrender.”

LIVING THE SURRENDERED LIFE

The Cross of Christ took on a new dimension to Oswald. No longer was it just a point of salvation; it became the place of self abandonment and surrender to the call of God.

It was more than a place of forgiveness; it was a place of hallowed ground where he and we stand and willingly identify with Jesus Christ. It is where we “give up our right to ourselves” and die to self.

Out of this death comes life and the opportunity to live a Spirit-filled existence.

(John 12:24) As we respond in obedience to God, He promises to lead and guide us through life with a sense of victory and hope. The times of trial, distress, and isolation are times God accomplishes His greatest work, when He moulds us into the likeness of Christ.

“The one great need for the missionary (Chambers uses this term for those who have given their lives completely to Christ) is to be ready for Jesus Christ, and we cannot be ready unless we have seen Him.” The way we come to see Jesus is through surrender. The blessing of living life abandoned to Him is to witness His daily power and grace alive and flowing through our lives into the lives of others.

In abandonment and surrender we find the

unbridled soul—one not tempted by the treasures of the world, but bound to the grace and glory of the Saviour. Oswald Chambers’ message is one that still calls to us today. It is a call to leave behind everything outside of Jesus Christ:

“The battle is lost or won in the secret places of the will before God, never first in the external world... Every now and again, not often, but sometimes, God brings us to a point of climax. That is the Great Divide in the life; from that point we either go towards a more and more dilatory and useless type of Christian life, or we become more and more ablaze for the glory of God - [Our] Utmost for His Highest.”

Attention

The Scriptural Attitude

Meditate upon these things... (1 Timothy 4:15)

Meditation means getting to the middle of a thing, pinning yourself down to a certain thing and concentratedly brooding upon it. The majority of us attend only to the “muddle” of things, consequently we get spiritual indigestion, the counterpart of physical indigestion, a desperately gloomy state of affairs. We cannot see anything rightly, and all we do see is stars. “Faith is...the evidence of things not seen.” Suppose Jesus suddenly lifted the veil from our eyes and let us see angels ministering to us, His Own Presence with us, the Holy Ghost in us, and the Father around us, how amazed we should be! We have lived in the “muddle” of things instead of in the middle of things. Faith gets us into the middle, which is God and God’s purpose. Elisha prayed for his servant, “LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see,” and when his eyes were opened he saw the host of God and nothing else.

We have to learn to pay attention to reality; one soul attending to reality is an emancipation to hundreds more. We are impertinently inquisitive about everything saving that one thing. Through inattention to our own true

capacity we live as in a dream, when all around us and in us are the eternal realities. *“Attend to these duties, let them absorb you, so that all men may note your progress.”* We are apt to be busy about everything but that which concerns our spiritual progress, and at the end of a profitless day we snatch up a Bible or *Daily Light* and read a few verses, and it does us good for precisely three-quarters of a second. We have to take time to be diligent. Meditation is not being like a pebble in a brook, allowing the waters of thought to flow over us; that is reverie.

Meditation is the most intense spiritual act, it brings every part of body and mind into harness. To be spiritual by effort is a sure sign of a false relationship to God; to be obedient by effort in the initial stage is a sure sign that we are determined to obey God at all costs. Take time. Remember we have all the time there is. The majority of us waste time and want to encroach on eternity. “Oh well, I will think about these things when I have time.” The only time you will have is the day after you are dead, and that will be eternity. **An hour, or half an hour, of daily attention to and meditation on our own spiritual life is the secret of progress.**

The Sacred Attention

...Take heed unto thyself. (1 Timothy 4:16)

If we have been living in unrealities, we shall find ourselves faced with a great impatience

when we do endeavour to face reality, and we are apt to behave like caged wild beasts. We have to take a grip of ourselves when we come to the true centre of things, and it means discipline *and* discipline, until we face nothing but realities. We have to exert a tremendous effort, and God is pleased to see us exert it. If you try and settle down before God in prayer when you have been dwelling in unrealities, you will recognise instantly the condition of things. As soon as you get down to pray you remember something else that needs to be done, a thousand and one little impertinences come in and claim your attention. When we suspend our own activities and get down at the foot of the cross and meditate there, God brings His thoughts to us by the Holy Spirit and interprets them to us. The only mind that understands the things of God is the child mind (see Matthew 11:25); our Lord continually mentioned this simplicity (see Matthew 18:3). It is the simplicity of God, not of an imbecile, a fundamental simplicity of relationship. God has not the remotest opportunity of coming to some of us, our minds are packed full with our own thoughts and conceptions; until suddenly He comes in like the wind and blows all our thoughts right away, and thoughts come sauntering in from the Word of God. We can never get those thoughts for ourselves. They are the free gift of God for anyone and everyone who is learning to pay attention to Him.

*Today, O Lord, cleanse me from flurried busyness, and keep me calmly and purely Thine.
Make this Hut the house of God, and the gate of heaven to men’s souls.*

The Character of Redeemed Experience

By Redeemed Experience is meant eternal life manifested in the fleeting moments of temporal life. What is *not* meant is the consciousness of feeling good, or the consciousness of the presence of God. If we

mistake these feelings for eternal life, we shall be disillusioned sooner or later. When we are being initiated into a new experience we are conscious of it, but any sane person is much too wise to mistake consciousness of life for life itself. It is only the initial stages of new experiences which produce consciousness of themselves, and if we hug the consciousness of God’s blessings and of His presence we become spiritual sentimentalists. God began to introduce us to life, and we would not go

through with it.

The Unique Character of this Life

The life which Jesus exhibited was eternal life, and He says—anyone who believes in Me, i.e. commits himself to Me, has that life. To commit myself to Jesus means there is nothing that is not committed. Belief is a twofold transaction—a deliberate destroying of all roads back again, and a complete surrender to Our

Lord Himself. **God comes in with a rush immediately a soul surrenders to the Lord Jesus Christ.** The only barrier to God's love is unbelief working sentimentally, i.e. brooding around the shores of an experience which produces consciousness of itself; the life is not there.

The Upward Character of the Life (John 11:41-42)

The upward look towards God of eternal life is an indication of the inherent nature of the life; that is, it is not attained by effort. Natural characteristics, natural virtues and natural attainments have nothing to do with the life itself. A blackguard and an upright man both commit themselves to Jesus Christ and receive eternal life; will the latter have freer access to God? No! Eternal life works the same in both. There is no respect of persons with

God. The manifestation of eternal life is, however, a different matter.

The Outward Character of the Life (John 3:16)

This verse gives the outlook man-ward of eternal life as exhibited by Our Lord. The only way to react rightly on men around is to let eternal life react through you, **and if you want to know how eternal life will react you will see it in Jesus Christ.** Our Lord was in no wise a hard worker; He was an intense reality. Hard workers are like midges and mosquitoes; the reality is like the mountain and the lake. Our Lord's life was one of amazing leisure, and the presentation of His life as one of rush is incorrect. The three years of public life are a manifestation of the intense reality of life (Acts 1:38). When the passion for souls obscures the

passion for Jesus Christ you have the devil on your track as an angel of light. Our Lord was never in a hurry, never in a panic. "There are no dates in His fine leisure." Our Lord's life is the exhibition of eternal life in time. Eternal life in the Christian is based on redemptive certainty; he is not working to redeem men; he is a fellow worker with God among men because they are redeemed.

The Downward Character of this Life (2 Corinthians 5:21)

The downward look of eternal life is manifested by Our Lord—a fearless, clear-eyed, understanding look at sin, at death, and at the devil—that is the unmistakable characteristic of the downward look of Our Lord. The devil's counterfeit is no sin, no hell and no judgment.

O Lord, touch all our lives with Thine energising power and loving-kindness and beauty; make it a time of the unveiling of Thy Face. This seems to be all my prayer.

The Magnitude of Redemption

(I Thessalonians 5:23)

We cannot be deeply moved by "nothing"; neither can we deeply move ourselves by anything we say, unless something profound has first of all entered into us. For example, it takes a great deal of realising what the Bible says about Redemption to enable us to walk out into our daily lives with that astonishing strength and peace that garrisons us within and without.

The Working of Redemptive Security

And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly... (I Thessalonians 5:23 RV)

The working of Redemptive security in our actual practical life is the realisation that "God is my Father, I shall never think of anything He will forget—why should I worry?" When you can say that from the ground of being profoundly moved, you are astonished at the amazing security. "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). The peace of Christ is synonymous with His very nature, and the "type" working of that peace was exhibited in Our Lord's earthly life. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding..." (Philippians 4:7). The Redemption at work in my actual life means the nature of God garrisoning me round; it is the *God of peace* Who sanctifies wholly; the security is almighty. The gift of the peace of Christ on the inside; the garrison of God on the outside, then I have to see that I allow the peace of God to regulate all that I do, that is where my responsibility comes in—"and let the

peace of Christ [RV] rule," i.e. arbitrate, "in your hearts," and life will be full of praise all the time.

The Working of Redemptive Strength

and may your spirit and soul and body... (RV)

The degree in which God will work depends on me, not on God; if I refuse in any part of my being to let God work, I not only limit Him, but I begin to criticise the Redemption. The working of Redemption strength means that "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" are mine when I am "at home" with God. Take up your dwelling in that word "all", then do some hunting through the Bible for spiritual blessings and say, "That is mine." If you remain on the outside and say, "Lord, bless me with this spiritual blessing," He cannot do it; the only result is to make you feel miserable; but get inside Christ, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are yours. It is not a question of experiencing them, you don't experience what is your life; you experience gifts given to your life. Experiences are always on the threshold of the life, they are never the real centre. Life is fullness of maturity, and there is no seeking for experiences. **Beware of not seeing that experiences are nothing other than gateways home.** "Saved and sanctified"—Paul says, "Go on! Get into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." You will be so hidden with Christ that you never think of anything but Him; there will be none of the things that keep the life impoverished.

The Working of Redemptive Safety

be preserved entirely, without blame... (RV)

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Dwelling under that shadow I am in the heart of Almighty God; where I dwell He manifests Himself all the time. It is an essentially natural life. When I am dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty, my life is the will of God; it is only through disobedience that I begin to ask what is the will of God. Any interest that would induce me away from the shadow of the Almighty is to be treated as a snare. Resolutely treat no one seriously but God. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strong rock...my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower" (Psalm 18:2 RV). Note the "my's" here, and laugh at everything in the nature of misgiving for ever after!

The Working of Redemptive Sight

...be preserved entire, without blame at the coming [presence, mg] of our Lord Jesus Christ. (RV)

The working of Redemptive sight gives me the habit of an elevated mood whereby God gives the vision of Himself. "Blessed are the pure in heart," literally, "Blessed are the God in heart," i.e. in whom the nature of God is. God's nature in us reveals His features in our life. "Man shall not see Me and live" [RV]. **When I see God I have to die; when I am in God I have died, and the nature of God works through me transparently all the time.** "We know that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" [RV].

The only way to maintain perception is to keep in contact with God's **purpose** as well as with His **Person**. I have to place myself in relation to

facts—facts in nature and facts in grace. If I refuse to do this my perception will be wrong, no matter how right my disposition may be; but the two together will produce a life perfectly in accordance with the life of the Son of God when He walked this earth.
“God is able to make all grace abound toward

you.” Have you been saying, “I cannot expect God to do that for me”? Why can’t you? Is God Almighty impoverished by your circumstances? Is His hand shortened that it cannot save? Are your particular circumstances so peculiar, so remote from the circumstances of every son and daughter of Adam, that the atonement and the

grace of God are not sufficient for you? Immediately we ask ourselves these things, we get shaken out of our sulks into a simple trust in God. **When we have the simple, childlike trust in God that Jesus exhibited, the overflowing grace of God will have no limits, and we must set no limits to it.**

O Lord, how complete is my need of Thee! Come into our actual circumstances today in the plenitude of Thy power.

Dimensions of Effective Redemption

(John 3:16; Ephesians 3:18-19)

By the “dimensions of effective Redemption,” understand the Redemption of God expressing itself in individual experience; but beware of limiting the Redemption to our individual experience of it.

Breadth

For God so loved the world...

The world embraces things material and things evil, things suffering and sinning. Think how narrow and bigoted the love of God is made when it is tied up in less than His own words; we make God out to be exactly the opposite of all Jesus Christ said He was. The breadth of the love of God, the agony of that love, is expressed in one word, “so”. **If you can estimate the “so”, you have fathomed the nature of God.** Our love is defective because we will not get down low enough. We must get down lower than hell if we would touch the love of God; we will persist in living in the sixteenth storey when the love of God is at the basement. We speculate on God’s love and discourse on the magnificence of the Redemption, while all the time it has never been made effective in us.

The love of God is broader

Than the measures of man’s mind.

—it embraces the whole world. Compare John 3:16 with Our Lord’s prayer in John 17. Our Lord did not pray that the world might be saved, but “that the world may know that Thou hast...loved them.” Our Lord prays for those in whom His Redemption is at work that they may live in effective contact with God—“that they may be one, even as We are one.”

The same thing with regard to sin and misery. In the Bible you never find the note of the pessimist. In the midst of the most crushing

conditions there is always an extraordinary hopefulness and profound joy, because God is at the heart. The effective working of the **Redemption in our experience makes us leap for joy in the midst of things in which other people see nothing but disastrous calamity.** When the Redemption is effectually at work it always rises to its source, viz. God.

Length

that He gave His only begotten Son...

When the supreme love of God in the giving of Himself has got hold of me, I love myself in the power of His love; that means a son of God being presented to God as a result of His effectual Redemption. “bringing many sons unto glory...” (Hebrews 2:10). That is a gratification to God because it is the returning back to Himself of His love in expressed reality. When the Redemption is effective in me, I am a delight to God, not to myself. **I am not meant for myself, I am meant for God.**

Depth

that whoever believeth in Him should not perish...

The love of God rakes the very bottom of hell, and from the depths of sin and suffering brings sons and daughters to God. To introduce the idea of merit into belief, i.e. that I have done something by believing, is to annul my belief and make it blasphemous. Belief is the abandonment of all claim to desert; that is why it is so difficult to believe in Jesus. It requires the renunciation of the idea that I am someone—“I must have this thing explained to me”; “I must be convinced first”. **When the Spirit of God gets hold of me, he takes the foundation of the fictitious out of me and leaves nothing but an aching cavern for God to fill.** “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

We love the lovely because it is flattering to us to do so. We love our kith and kin because it is the economy of pride to do so. God loves the un-lovely, and it broke His heart to do it. The depth of the love of God is revealed by that

wonderful word, “whosoever.” The Bible reveals God to be the Lover of His enemies (Romans 5:6-10). We will stick to our “rag-rights” (Isaiah 64:6), until by God’s engineering of our circumstances, every rag-right is blown from us and we are left with nothing; we become abject paupers, and say, “It’s all up,” and we find ourselves in heaven! We will persist in sticking to the thing that must be damned.

*Not by wrestling, but by clinging
Shall we be most blessed.*

Height

...but have everlasting life.

The Redemption of Jesus Christ effectively at work in me puts me where He was, and where He is, and where we shall forever be (John 14:23; 16:23, 26). It is a terrific lift by the sheer, unaided love of God into a precious oneness with Himself if I will only let Him do it. It is not a magic-working necromantic thing, but the energy of His own life. The “realest” thing is the love of God by means of the effective working of Redemption. On the human plane, we may have real love but low: my love, i.e. the sovereign preference of my person for another person, is in order that my purpose may be fulfilled; and when Jesus Christ comes into the life, it looks as if He were the dead enemy of that love. He is not; He is the dead enemy of the low-ness. When the love of God is realised by me, the sovereign preference of my person for God enables Him to manifest His purpose in me.

To realise the dimensions of the love of God, its breadth, and length, and depth, and height, will serve to drive home to us the reality of God’s love, and the result of our belief in that love will be that no question will ever profoundly vex our minds, no sorrow overwhelm our spirits, **because our heart is at rest in God, just as the heart of our Lord was at rest in His Father.** This does not mean that our faith will not be tested; if it is faith, it must be tested, but, profoundly speaking, it will be supremely easy to believe in God.

Oswald Chambers firmly believed in the concept of “seed-thoughts”—brief, pithy sayings designed to arrest attention and stimulate thinking. The following quote best expresses his conviction on how to affect a person’s mind and behaviour:

Our Lord was never impatient. He simply planted seed thoughts in the disciples’ minds and surrounded them with the atmosphere of His own life. We get impatient and take men by the scruff of the neck and say: “You must believe this and that.” You cannot make a man see moral truth by persuading his intellect. “When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth.”