"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

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 intensely 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.”

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**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 unreality, 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 unreality, 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 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.
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 effectively 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 takes 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 the love of God. That is return to the formula of merit, and insist on 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.

Oswald Chambers firmly believed in the concept of “seed-thoughts”—brief, pithy sayings designed to arrest attention and stimulate thinking. The following quote 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.”

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