



THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

◆

APPROVED UNTO GOD

◆



◆

OSWALD CHAMBERS

❖

Introduction

Approved unto God

Source

These lectures were given to students in the sermon class at the Bible Training College,* London, from 1911 to 1915.

Publication History

- As articles: These lectures were published in the *BTC Monthly Journal*, May 1932-March 1934.*
- As a book: The material was first published in 1936.
- *Facing Reality* (© 1939) was incorporated in the 1946 and later editions.

Chambers limited the BTC* sermon classes to enrolled students only and allowed no visitors. Since sermon preparation and delivery were course requirements, he wanted all class members on an equal footing as participants, with no idle observers and critics. Much more than a course on how to

* Residential school near Clapham Common in SW London, sponsored by the League of Prayer. Oswald Chambers was Principal and main teacher; Biddy Chambers was Lady Superintendent. Known as the BTC, it closed in July 1915 because of World War I.

* *Bible Training Course Journal*: published from 1932 to 1952 by Mrs. Chambers, with help from David Lambert.

* Bible Training College, London, 1911-1915.



prepare and deliver sermons, these lectures reveal Chambers' heart concerning being a worker for God.

To these students Chambers said: "Here in this College, God can break or bend or mould, just as He chooses. You do not know why He is doing it; He is doing it for one purpose only, that He may be able to say, 'This is My man, My woman.'"

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

CONTENTS

APPROVED UNTO GOD

Foreword

The Worker

The Base

The Worker's Spiritual Life

The Worker and the Word

The Right Lines of Work

The Student

Where Am I? (A Spiritual Stock-taking)

The Mastering Mission

The Complete Christian

Keep Bright by Use

The Preacher's Obligations

Don'ts and Do's about Texts

First Things First

The Origin of Our Salvation

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The Cross in Discipleship

The Reason Why

Be Sure of the Abysses of God

What Is Following Jesus Christ?

God's

Identification

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Foreword

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15), makes a big demand upon a worker for God, and these God-given messages, spoken to the students at the Bible Training College,* London, by the Principal, the late Oswald Chambers, help us to meet that Divine requirement. One clear note in them is “that the servant of God has to go through the experience of things before he is allowed to go through a study of them.” So the worker is required to enter voluntarily into that discipline of his life that will bring him into line with God’s way for him. Here there is as much insistence upon spiritual fitness as right mentality, and upon intellectual discipline as upon spiritual well-being. The worker for God is a unity, spirit, soul and body, and needs to be brought by God’s grace and by personal choice and concentration into a harmoniously working whole. Mere intellectualism can be a great snare and mere pietism is not enough. The man of God to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work must accept the spiritual discipline of reproof and correction and training in righteousness that the Scriptures convey, and also the mental discipline which a right understanding of the Scripture demands. These Talks in a striking manner put us in the way of becoming competent servants of Jesus

* Residential school near Clapham Common in SW London, sponsored by the League of Prayer. Oswald Chambers was Principal and main teacher; Biddy Chambers was Lady Superintendent. Known as the BTC, it closed in July 1915 because of World War I.



Christ, spiritually fit, and mentally fitted, for the great task entrusted to us. Do not read this book unless you mean business, but if you do you will find wisdom and understanding on every page.

David Lambert *

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* David Lambert (1871-1961): Methodist minister and friend of Oswald Chambers. Assisted Mrs. Chambers with OC publications from 1917-1961.

❖

The Worker

1 Corinthians 9:11-27

The Matter

Plant every man on the Rock, and plant the whole man there.

(a) Amid a Crowd of Paltry Things (1 Corinthians 9:11-15)

The first thing a worker has to learn is how to be God's noble man or woman amid a crowd of paltry things. A Christian worker must never make this plea—"If only I were somewhere else!" The only test that a worker is Christ's witness is that he never becomes mean* from contact with mean people any more than he becomes sinful from contact with sinful people.

We are not workers for God by our own choice (see John 15:16). Many deliberately choose to be workers for God, but they have no matter of God's mighty grace in them, no matter from God's mighty word. The pattern for God's worker is that he is entrusted with a mission—for example, Moses and the Apostle Paul. We have to be in God's hand so that He can plant men on the Rock as He has

* mean: ordinary, common, low, or ignoble, rather than cruel or spiteful

planted us, not by our testimony only, but because we are being made co-workers with God.

(b) Amid a Creed of Powerful Things (1 Corinthians 9:16-17)

Unless we have the right matter in our minds intellectually and in our hearts affectionately, we will be hustled out of usefulness to God. Keep the note of greatness in your creed: Whom do I believe Jesus Christ is? What do I believe sin is? What do I believe God can do with sin? What do I believe is God's purpose for the human race? Face yourself with one central Fact only, the Lord Jesus Christ, His Life and Death and Resurrection.

Every Christian must testify, testimony is the nature of the life; but for preaching there must be the agonising grip of God's hand, something akin to verse 16. The whole of my life, says Paul, is in the grip of God for this one thing, I cannot turn to the right hand or to the left, I am here for one purpose, to preach the gospel. How many of us are held like that? The note of the majority is verse 17, that is why there is so much mediocrity, so much lazy work for God. "I have chosen you"—that is where the note of greatness is struck out of your creed.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Manner

However things move, they do not change us.

(a) The External Crush of Things (1 Corinthians 9:18-19)

God buries His men in the midst of paltry things, no monuments are erected to them, they are ignored, not because they are unworthy but because they are in the place where they cannot be seen. Who could see Paul in Corinth? Paul only became marvellous after he had gone. All God's men are ordinary men made extraordinary by the matter He has given them. God puts His workers where He puts His Son. This is the age of the humiliation of the saints.

Manner is the outcome of matter. Paul's whole soul and mind and heart were taken up with the great matter of what Jesus Christ came to do, he never lost sight of that one thing (see 1 Corinthians 2:2).

(b) The Ethical Character of Things (1 Corinthians 9:20-27)

"I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22 rv). The worker who is not chosen by God says, "I am all things to all men, and nothing in particular to any

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



man.” The stamp of the worker gripped by God is that, slowly and surely, one here and another there is being won for God.

The worker chosen by God has to believe what God wishes him to believe, though it cost agony in the process; the worker who chooses to work for God may believe what he likes. It is the latter class who exploit the Bible.

Here, in this College,* God can break or bend or mould, just as He chooses. You do not know why He is doing it; He is doing it for One purpose only, that He may be able to say, “This is My man, My woman.” Never choose to be a worker, but when once God has put His call on you, woe be to you if you turn to the right hand or to the left. God will do with you what He never did with you before the call came; He will do with you what He is not doing with other people. Let Him have His way.

* Residential school near Clapham Common in SW London, sponsored by the League of Prayer. Oswald Chambers was Principal and main teacher; Biddy Chambers was Lady Superintendent. Known as the BTC, it closed in July 1915 because of World War I.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Base

1 Timothy 1:12

The Real Thanks of the Worker

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord . . .

Everything that God has created is like an orchestra praising Him. “All Thy works shall praise Thee.” In the ear of God everything He created makes exquisite music, and man joined in the paean of praise until he fell, then there came in the frantic discord of sin. The realisation of Redemption brings man by way of the minor note of repentance back into tune with praise again. The angels are only too glad to hear that note, because it blends man into harmony again (see Luke 15:10).

Praising God is the ultimate end and aim of all we go through. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.” What does it matter whether you are well or ill! whether you have money or none! It is all a matter of indifference, but one thing is not a matter of indifference, and that is that we are pleasing to the ears of God.

Paul had got back again by way of repentance into tune with God (cf. 1 Timothy 1:13), and now he has his base as a worker in thanksgiving to Christ

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

Jesus; his whole life has been brought into perfect relation to God.



THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Realised Test of the Worker



who hath enabled me . . .

The test of the worker is that he knows he has been enabled by the Lord Jesus, therefore he works and learns to do it better all the time. The realisation that my Lord has enabled me to be a worker keeps me strong enough never to be weak. Conscious obtrusive weakness is natural unthankful strength; it means I refuse to be made strong by Him. When I say I am too weak it means I am too strong; and when ever I say "I can't" it means "I won't." When Jesus Christ enables me, I am omnipotently strong all the time. Paul talks in paradoxes, "for when I am weak, then am I strong."

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Recognized Truth by the Worker

for that He counted me faithful . . .

To recognise that my Lord counts us faithful removes the last snare of idealising natural pluck. If we have the idea that we must face the difficulties with pluck, we have never recognised the truth that He has counted us faithful; it is His work in me He is counting worthy, not my work for Him. The truth is we have nothing to fear and nothing to overcome because He is all in all and we are more than conquerors through Him. The recognition of this truth is not flattering to the worker's sense of heroics, but it is amazingly glorifying to the work of Christ. He counts us worthy because He has done everything for us. It is a shameful thing for Christians to talk about "getting the victory"; by this time the Victor ought to have got us so completely that it is His victory all the time, not ours. The overcoming referred to in the Book of the Revelation is not the personal overcoming of difficulties but the overcoming of the very life of God in us while we stand resolutely true to Him.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Responsible Trust of the Worker

. . . putting me into the ministry.

The ministry is, the “glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” If I am going to be loyal to that trust, it will mean I must never allow any impertinent sensitiveness to hinder my keeping the trust. My trust is the glorious gospel for myself and through me to others, and it is realised in two ways: in the perfect certainty that God has redeemed the world, and in the imperative necessity of working on that basis with everyone with whom I come in contact (cf. Colossians 1:28-29).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Worker's Spiritual Life

Communication of the Life of God (Galatians 2:20)

As a worker, watch the “sea-worthiness” of your spiritual life; never allow a spiritual leakage. Spiritual leakage arises either by refusing to treat God seriously, or by refusing to do anything for Him seriously. Bear in mind two things: the pressure of God on your thought from without, and the pressure of God on your attention from within.

There are three ways in which we can responsibly receive communications from God: by giving deliberate thoughtful attention to the Incarnation; by identifying ourselves with the Church, and by means of Bible revelation. God gave Himself in the Incarnation; He gives Himself to the Church; and He gives Himself in His Word; and these are the ways He has ordained for conveying His life to us. The mere reading of the Word of God has power to communicate the life of God to us mentally, morally and spiritually. God makes the words of the Bible a sacrament, i.e., the means whereby we partake of His life, it is one of His secret doors for the communication of His life to us.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Co-Ordination of Our Capacities for God (Ephesians 3:16-19)

Our whole being, not one aspect of it, has to be brought to comprehend the love of God. We are apt to co-ordinate our spiritual faculties only; our lack of co-ordination is detected if we cannot pass easily from what we call the secular to the sacred. Our Lord passed from the one to the other without any break; the reason we cannot is that we are not pressed on to the life of God. We have made “a world within the world” of our own which we have to guard jealousy: “I must not do this and that”; “I must keep myself entirely here.” That is not the life of God at all, it is not genuine enough; it is artificial and cannot stand the strain of actual life. There is no room in the New Testament for sickly piety, but room only for the robust, vigorous, open-air life that Jesus lived—*in* the world but not *of* it, the whole life guided and transfigured by God. Beware of the piety that is not stamped by the life of God, but by the type of a religious experience. Be absolutely and fiercely godly in your life, but never be pious. A “pi” person does not take God seriously, he only takes himself seriously, the one tremendous worship of his life is his experience.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Concentrated Centring on God (Romans 8:3)

If we would concentrate on God we must mortify our religious self-will. Our Lord refused to be self-willed religiously, and it was this that staggered the Pharisees. We are self-willed religiously, consequently we tell God we do not intend to concentrate on Him, we only intend to concentrate on our idea of what the saintly life should be, and before long we find that the pressing in of the life of God ceases and we begin to wilt. We are living a religiously self-centred life and the communication of life from God comes no longer. We must beware of turning away from God by grubbing amongst our own experiences.

God does not expect us to *imitate* Jesus Christ: He expects us to allow the life of Jesus to be manifested in our mortal flesh. God engineers circumstances and brings us into difficult places where no one can help us, and we can either manifest the life of Jesus in those conditions, or else be cowards and say, "I cannot exhibit the life of God there." Then we deprive God of glory. If you will let the life of God be manifested in your particular human edition—where God cannot manifest it, that is why He called you, you will bring glory to God.

The spiritual life of a worker is literally, God manifest in the flesh.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Worker and the Word

Aspect of Sacred Authority (Matthew 21:23)

Authority means a rule to which the worker is bound in loyalty. It is not sufficient to say, “Because Jesus Christ says so, therefore you must obey,” unless we are talking to people who know Who Jesus Christ is. Authority must be of a moral, not a superstitious character. In the old days it was the authority of the Church, or the authority of the Bible; both these were external authorities, not indigenous to man. Nowadays people are saying, “Bother* external authority; why should I accept external authority?” Immediately a man becomes spiritual by being born from above (rv mg), the Bible becomes his authority, because he discerns a law in his conscience that has no objective resting place save in the Bible; and when the Bible is quoted, instantly his intuition says, “Yes, that must be the truth”; not because the Bible says so, but because he discerns what the Bible says to be the word of God for him. When a man is born from above (rv mg) he has a new internal standard, and the only objective standard that agrees with it is the word of God as expressed in the Bible.

What is needed to-day is not a new gospel, but live men and women who can re-state the Gospel of the Son of God in terms that will reach the very heart of our problems. To-day men are flinging the

* bother (verb): forget, disregard.



truth overboard as well as the terms. Why should we not become workmen who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth to our own people? The majority of orthodox ministers are hopelessly useless, and the unorthodox seem to be the only ones who are used. We need men and women saturated with the truth of God who can restate the old truth in terms that appeal to our day.

Aspect of Social Authority (John 18:36)

Christianity is in its essence social. When once we begin to live from the otherworldly standpoint, as Jesus Christ wants us to live, we shall need all the fellowship with other Christians we can get. Some of us can do without Church fellowship because we are not Christians of the otherworldly order. Immediately a man dares to live on Jesus Christ's line, the world, the flesh and the devil are dead against him in every particular. "The only virtue you will have in the eyes of the world as My disciples," says Jesus, "is that you will be hated." That is why we need to be knit together with those of like faith; and that is the meaning of the Christian Church.

In the old days the ecclesiastics used to dictate, now they are ignored, and instead we have a society of men as they are. In the present day we have to face a brotherhood of men apart from Jesus Christ. If a man stands on the present system of civilisation as one of the general brotherhood of men, and yet proclaims a different brotherhood, that of the disciples of Jesus Christ, John 16:2 will be the result, "they shall put you out of the synagogues." According to Jesus Christ, Christianity is a society

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

based on the brotherhood of men who have been lifted into a right relationship with God by regeneration. “My kingdom is not of this world,” said Jesus, and yet we are more inclined to take our orders from the world than from Jesus Christ.

Aspect of Personality (John 17:22)

The conception which Jesus Christ had of society was that men might be one with Him as He was one with the Father. The full-orbed meaning of the term “personality” in its fundamental aspect is a being created by God who has lived on this earth and formed his character. The majority of us are not personalities as yet, we are beginning to be, and our value to God in His Kingdom depends on the development and growth of our personality. There is a difference between being saved and sanctified by the sheer sovereign grace of God and choosing to be the choice ones, not for heaven, but down here. The average view of Christianity, that we only need to have faith and we are saved, is a stumbling block. How many of us care anything about being witnesses to Jesus Christ? How many of us are willing to spend every ounce of energy we have, every bit of mental, moral and spiritual life for Jesus Christ? That is the meaning of a worker in God’s sense. God has left us on earth, what for? To be saved and sanctified? No, to be at it for Him. If we are “footing it”^{*} bit by bit, and living in the otherworldly spirit while in the world, we are developing our personality, and are of far more

^{*} footing it: walking; taking it one step at a time.



worth to Jesus Christ than those who have entered into the experience of sanctification but have never gone on any farther.

Are we willing to be broken bread and poured-out wine in Jesus Christ's hands for others? to be spoilt for this age, for this life, this time, spoilt from every standpoint saving as we can disciple men and women to Him? My life as a worker is the way I say "Thank you" to God for His unspeakable salvation. The hatred and the indignation of the world does not come when we are sanctified; it comes when we try to live our daily life according to the rule of sanctification. It is not preaching sanctification that awakens resentment, but living the life to which sanctification introduces us, the life of oneness with Jesus Christ, and insisting that that oneness be manifested in our practical life. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man. . . . From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." It is quite possible for anyone to be cast out as reprobate silver, "lest that by any means, . . . I myself should be a castaway."

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Right Lines of Work

1 Timothy 6:20-21

What to Concentrate On (2 Timothy 1:13-14)

To concentrate is not to be absorbed or carried away with a subject; concentration is the sternest physical effort. There is nothing spiritual about the brain. Control over associated ideas must be acquired, it is not a natural gift. Never garrison an infirmity with indifference—“Oh, I can’t.” DO IT!

Paul gives Timothy indications of the right lines of work: he is to concentrate on the deposit of truth conveyed by the words of Scripture. As a preacher never have as your ideal the desire to be an orator or a beautiful speaker; if you do, you will not be of the slightest use. Read Matthew 23, and Mark 7, and see the rugged, taste-shattering language of Our Lord. An orator moves men to do what they are indifferent about; a preacher of the Gospel has to move men to do what they are dead-set against doing, viz., giving up the right to themselves. The one calling of a New Testament preacher is to uncover sin and reveal Jesus Christ as Saviour, consequently he cannot be poetical, he has to be surgical. We are not sent to give beautiful discourses which make people say, “What a lovely conception that is,” but to unearth the devil and his works in human souls. We have to probe straight down

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

where God has probed us, and the measure of the probing is the way God has probed us.

Be keen in sensing those Scriptures that contain the truth which comes straight home, and apply them fearlessly. The tendency nowadays is to get a truth of God and gloss it over. Always keep the sense of the passage you expound. For example, in Malachi 2:13 the prophet tells the people that God will not regard their offerings, though they cover “the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out.” The context gives the reason: there is a wrong temper of mind and secret immorality. Never sympathise with a soul whose case makes you come to the conclusion that God is hard. God is tenderer than anyone we can conceive of, and if a man cannot get through to Him it is because there is a secret thing he does not intend to give up. It is impossible to deal poetically with a case like that, you have to go right down to the root of the trouble until there is antagonism and pain and resentment against the message. The Gospel of Jesus awakens a tremendous craving but also a tremendous resentment. People want the blessing of God, but they will not stand the probing and the humiliation. As workers, our one method is merciless insistence on the one line, cutting down to the very root, otherwise there will be no healing.

Always carry out the significance of your text with as many details as possible. To the majority of men, holiness is all in the clouds, but take this message, “Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,” and drive it home on every line until there is no refuge from the terrific application. Holy

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



not only in my religious aspirations, but holy in my soul life, in my imagination and thinking; holy in every detail of my bodily life. Let your text get such hold of you that you never depart from its application. Never use your text as a title for a speculation of your own, that is being an impertinent exploiter of the word of God.

What to Concentrate For (2 Timothy 2:23-26)

Remember that the underlying principles upon which God has built human nature and the underlying principles of the Bible go together, and learn to bring the meaning of your text to bear on those principles. Leave your text alone apparently until you get men to realise in the sphere of their own lives where they lack. Then erect the standard of Jesus Christ for their lives and say for them—"But we never can be that!" Then drive it home—"But God says you must be." "How can we be?" "You cannot, unless you have a new spirit, and Jesus says that God will give you the Holy Spirit if you ask Him" (see Luke 11:13)

There must be a sense of need before your message is of any use. For example, if you present John 3:16 to a crowd of moral upright men and women, it has no application to them, the subject is not alive to them, they are in a different domain. Men are "dead in trespasses and sins," not necessarily blackguards, but their minds are blinded by the god of this world. That is the crowd we have to get in amongst, and it can only be done by relying on the Holy Spirit to awaken conviction where as yet

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



there is none. Behind the preaching of the Gospel the creative Redemption of God is at work in the souls of men, and when the Spirit of God begins to work on their hearts they see a standard they never saw before. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Once let Jesus Christ be lifted up, and the Spirit of God creates the need for Him.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Student

2 Timothy 2:15

Practical Sphere of Work (2 Corinthians 11:9; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:9)

The difficulty in Christian work to-day is that we put it into a sphere that upsets the reasoning of things—this sphere for sacred and that for secular; this time for activity and that for study. God will never allow us to divide our lives into sacred and secular, into study and activity. We generally think of a student as one who shuts himself up and studies in a reflective way, but that is never revealed in God's book. A Christian's thinking ought to be done in activities, not in reflection, because we only come to right discernment in activities. Some incline to study naturally in the reflective sense, others incline more to steady active work; the Bible combines both in one life. We are apt to look on workers for God as a special class, but that is foreign to the New Testament. Our Lord was a carpenter; Paul was a weaver. If you try and live in compartments, God will tumble up the time. Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will bring you into the circumstances that will develop the particular side of your life that He wants developed, and be careful that you do not upset His plans by bringing in your own ideas.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

Another danger in work for God is to make natural temperament the line of service. The gifts of the Spirit are built on God's sovereignty, not on our temperament. We are apt to limit God by saying, "Oh, I'm not built like that"; or, "I have not been well educated." Never limit God by those paralysing thoughts, it is the outcome of unbelief. What does it matter to the Lord Almighty of heaven and earth what your early training was like! What does matter to Him is that you don't lean to your own understanding, but acknowledge Him in all your ways. So crush on the threshold of your mind any of those lame, limping "I can'ts,"—"you see I am not gifted." The great stumbling-block that prevents some people being simple disciples of Jesus is that they *are* gifted—so gifted that they won't trust in the Lord with all their hearts. You have to learn to break by the power of the Holy Spirit the fuss and the lethargy which alternate in your life, and remember that it is a crime to be weak in His strength.

Poverty and Work (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for our sakes not as an example, but to give us the unerring secret of His religion. Professional Christianity is a religion of possessions that are devoted to God; the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of personal relationship to God, and has nothing whatever to do with possessions. The disciple is rich not in possessions, but in personal identity. Voluntary poverty was the marked condition of Jesus (see Luke 9:58), and the poverty of God's children in all ages is a significant thing. To-day we are ashamed and afraid to be poor. The reason we hear so little about the inner spiritual

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

side of external poverty is that few of us are in the place of Jesus, or of Paul. The scare of poverty will knock the spiritual backbone out of us unless we have the relationship that holds. The attitude of Our Lord's life was that He was disconnected with everything to do with things that chain people down to this world, consequently He could go wherever His Father wanted Him to.

Providential Will of God (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Remember you are accountable to no one but God; keep yourself for His service along the line of His providential leading for you, not on the line of your temperament. The servant of God has to go through the experience of things before he is allowed to go through the study of them. When you have had the experience God will give you the line for study; the experience first, and then the explanation of the experience by the Spirit of God. Each one of us is an isolated person with God, and He will put us through experiences that are not meant for us at all, but meant to make us fit stuff to feed others.

How much time have you given to wondering what God is doing with you? It is not your business. Your part is to acknowledge God in all your ways, and He will blend the active and the spiritual until they are inseparable, and you learn to live in activities knowing that your life is hid with Christ in God.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Where Am I?

A Spiritual Stock-Taking

Why Do I Want to Work? (Romans 10:15)

The Christian worker must be sent; he must not elect to go. Nowadays that is the last thing thought of; it is a determination on the part of the individual—"This is something I can do, and I am going to do it." Beware of demanding that people go into work, it is a craze; the majority of saved souls are not fit to feed themselves yet. How am I to know I have been sent of God? Firstly, by the realisation that I am utterly weak and powerless and if I am to be of any use to God, God must do it all the time. Is this the humiliating certainty of my soul, or merely a sentimental phrase? Secondly, because I know I have to point men to Jesus Christ, not to get them to think what a holy man I am. The only way to be sent is to let God lift us right out of any sense of fitness in ourselves and place us where He will. The man whose work tells for God is the one who not only realises what God has done for him but who realises his own utter unfitness and overwhelming unsuitability—the impossibility of God ever calling *me*. God allows us to scrutinise ourselves in order to understand what Paul said: "We also are weak in him."

Occasionally it may happen in your life as a worker that all you have been trying honestly and

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

eagerly to do for God falls about your ears in ruins, and in your utterly crushed and discouraged condition God brings slowly to your mind this truth—"I have been using your work as scaffolding to perfect you to be a worker for Myself; now arise, shake off the dust, and it shall be told you what you must do." Before ever God can use us as workers He has to bring us to a place of entire poverty, where we shall have no doubt as to where we are, "Here I am, absolutely no good!" Then God can send us, but not until then. We put hindrances in the way of God's working by trying to do things for Him. The impatience of modern life has so crept into Christian work that we will not settle down before God and find out what He wants us to do.

Where Do I Live? (Psalm 91:1)

No one can tell you where the shadow of the Almighty is, you must find that out for yourself. When you have found out where it is, stay there; under that shadow no evil can ever befall you. The intensity of the moments spent under the shadow of the Almighty is the measure of your usefulness as a worker. Intensity of communion is not in feelings or emotions or in special places, but in quiet, fixed, confident centring on God. Never allow anything to hinder you from being in the place where your spiritual life is maintained. The expression of our lips must correspond with our communion with God. It is easy to say good and true things without troubling to live up to them; consequently the Christian talker is more likely to be a hypocrite than any other kind of worker. In all probability you will find you could express things better a few months or years ago

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

than you can now, because the Spirit of God has been making you realise since then what you are talking about, and through the consequent distress that laid hold of mind and heart you have been driven to find out the secret place of the Most High. The strange thing is that a worker will more often exhibit ugly characteristics than one who is not a worker. There is an irritability and an impatience and a dogmatism about the average Christian worker that is never seen in those who are not engaged in that kind of work.

What Do I Know about Judgment? (1 Peter 4:17)

Peter is talking about suffering, and he says “the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” Where is the house of God? My body. As a child of God I have no right to go through a dispensation of suffering without asking my Father the reason for it. It may be suffering because of a purpose of God which He cannot explain to you, but He makes you know in your inmost heart that all is well (see verse 19). Or it may be suffering for chastisement and discipline. An undisciplined saint is inclined either to despise the chastening^t and say it is of the devil, or else to faint when he is rebuked, and cave in. The writer to the Hebrews says: “If you are a saint you will be chastened, be careful, see that you don’t despise it.” Or it may be suffering as Jesus suffered (see Hebrews 5:8; 2 Corinthians 1:5). In all these ways we have to learn how to let judgment begin at “the house of God.” We escape judgment in a hundred and one ways, consequently we do not develop.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



If you are a worker whom God has sent, and have learned to live under His Shadow, you will find that scarcely a day goes by without your Father revealing the need of further chastening. If any child of God is free from the goads of God, he is not in the line of the succession of Jesus Christ. If we suffer as He suffered, we are in the right line (see 1 Peter 4:13). We have to learn to bring the scrutiny of God's judgment upon ourselves. When we talk about suffering we are apt to think only of bodily pain, or of suffering because we have given up something for God, which is paltry nonsense. Joy and peace and delight all come into the life of the saint but they are so on the surface that he never heeds them; they are simply complements. The one central point for the saint is being absolutely right with God, and the only way he gets there is by this personal experience of judgment.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Mastering Mission

2 Corinthians 5:11, 14

The Obligation of Master Persuasion (2 Corinthians 5:11)

Whenever Paul talks about his call to preach the gospel, it is a “woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” It is not a calm, quiet choice, but a necessity laid upon him, an overmastering sense of call. The great note of Paul’s life is that he is mastered by his mission, he cannot get away from it.

First Corinthians 9:22-23 is the exposition of Paul’s sense of unrelieved obligation—“To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake.” Paul’s persuading was by no means always successful (see Acts 17:32) but he never allowed that to deter him (see Acts 28:23-24). Paul’s very earnestness for Jesus was made the subtle ground of accusing him of madness, and the strange thing is that among a section of the more fanatical they called him too sober (see 2 Corinthians 5:13).

A worker for God must be prepared to endure hardness; he must learn how to “sop up” all the bad and turn it into good, and nothing but the supernatural grace of God and his sense of obligation will enable him to do it. As workers we

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



will be brought into relationship with people for whom we have no affinity; we have to stand for one thing only, “that I might by all means save some.” The one mastering obligation of our life as a worker is to persuade men for Jesus Christ, and to do that we have to learn to live amongst facts: the fact of human stuff as it is, not as it ought to be; and the fact of Bible revelation, whether it agrees with our doctrines or not.

The Overruling Majesty of Personal Power (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Paul says he is overruled, overmastered, held as in a vice, by the love of Christ. The majority of us are held only by the constraint of our experience. Very few of us know what it is to be held as in a grip by the sense of the love of God. “For the love of Christ constraineth us.” Once that note is heard, you can never mistake it; you know that the Holy Spirit is having unhindered way in that man or woman’s life. Abandon to the love of Christ is the one thing that bears fruit. Personal holiness may easily step over into sanctified Pharisaism, but abandon to the love of God will always leave the impression of the holiness and the power of God.

When we are born again of the Spirit the note of our testimony is what God has done for us, and rightly so; but the baptism of the Holy Ghost obliterates that for ever. God will never answer our prayer to be baptised by the Holy Ghost for any other reason than to be a witness for Jesus. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me” (rv).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Not witnesses of what Jesus can do, that is an elementary witness, but “witnesses unto Me”; you will be instead of Me, you will take everything that happens, praise or blame, persecution or commendation, as happening to Me.” No one can stand that unless he is constrained by the majesty of the personal power of Jesus. Paul says, “I am constrained by the love of Christ, held as in a fever, gripped as by a disease, that is why I act as I do; you may call me mad or sober, I do not care; I am after only one thing—to persuade men of the judgment seat of Christ and of the love of God.”

The great passion in much of the preaching of today is to secure an audience. As workers for God our object is never to secure our audience, but to secure that the Gospel is presented to men. Never presume to preach unless you are mastered by the motive born of the Holy Ghost: “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Complete Christian

Conformed to the Master's Standard (Luke 6:40)

Jesus Christ's standard for the worker is Himself. Am I allowing His standard to obsess me? Am I measuring my life by His all the time? The one standard put before us is Our Lord Himself; we have to be saturated in this ideal in thinking and in praying, and allow nothing to blur the standard. We must lift up Jesus Christ not only in the preaching of the Gospel but to our own souls. If my mind and heart and spirit is getting fixed with one Figure only, the Lord Jesus Christ, and other people and other ideas are fading, then I am growing in grace. The one dominant characteristic in the life of the worker is that Jesus Christ is coming more into the ascendant. The motive is not a sentiment but a passion, the blazing passion of the Holy Ghost in the soul of the worker; not—"because Jesus has done so much for me," that is a sickening, unscriptural statement. The one attitude of the life is Jesus Christ *first, second, and third*, and nothing apart from Him. The thing that hinders God's work is not sin, but other claims which are right, but which at a certain point of their rightness conflict with the claims of Jesus Christ. If the conflict should come, remember it is to be Jesus first (see Luke 14:26).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

Consecrated to the Master's Sovereignty (2 Timothy 2:21)

The vessels in a household have their honour from the use made of them by the head of the house. As a worker I have to separate myself for one purpose—for Jesus Christ to use me for what He likes. Imitation, doing what other people do, is an unmitigated curse. Am I allowing anyone to mould my ideas of Christian service? Am I taking my ideas from some servant of God or from God Himself? We are here for one thing only—to be vessels “meet for the Master’s use.” We are not here to work for God because we have chosen to do so, but because God has apprehended us. Natural ability has nothing to do with service; consequently there is never any thought of, “Oh, well, I am not fitted for this.”

One student a year who hears God’s call would be sufficient for God to have called this College* into existence. This College* as an organisation is not worth anything, it is not academic; it is for nothing else but for God to help Himself to lives. Is He going to help Himself to your life, or are you taken up with your conception of what you are going to do? God is responsible for our lives, and the one great keynote is reckless reliance upon Him.

* Residential school near Clapham Common in SW London, sponsored by the League of Prayer. Oswald Chambers was Principal and main teacher; Biddy Chambers was Lady Superintendent. Known as the BTC, it closed in July 1915 because of World War I.

* Bible Training College, London, 1911-1915.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

Complete for the Master's Service (2 Timothy 3:14, 17)

Am I learning how to use my Bible? The way to become complete for the Master's service is to be well soaked in the Bible, some of us only exploit certain passages. Our Lord wants to give us continuous instruction out of His word; continuous instruction turns hearers into disciples. Beware of "spooned meat"* spirituality, of using the Bible for the sake of getting messages; use it to nourish your own soul. Be a continuous learner, don't stop short, and the truth will open to you on the right hand and on the left until you find there is no problem in human life with which the Bible does not deal. But remember that there are certain points of truth Our Lord cannot reveal to us until our character is in a fit state to bear it. The discernment of God's truth and the development of character go together.

The life God places in the Christian worker is the life of Jesus Christ, which is continually changing spiritual innocence into glorious practical character.

* spooned meat: liquefied food that requires no chewing or effort—baby food

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Keep Bright by Use

General Maxims—

- (a) If you lack education, first realise it; then cure it.
- (b) Beware of knowing what you don't practise.

Cultivate Mental Habits

Give attendance to reading. (1 Timothy 4:13)

If we wish to excel in secular things, we concentrate; why should we be less careful in work for God? Don't get dissipated; determine to develop your intellect for one purpose only—to make yourself of more use to God. Have a perfect machine ready for God to use. It is impossible to read too much, but always keep before you why you read. Remember that “the need to receive, recognise, and rely on the Holy Spirit” is before all else.

Constantly Aim at the Highest

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine. (1 Timothy 4:16)

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Remember that preaching is God's ordained method of saving the world (see 1 Corinthians 1:21). Take time before God and find out the highest ideal for an address. Never mind if you do not reach the ideal, but work at it, and never say fail. By work and steady application you will acquire the power to do with ease what at first seemed so difficult. Avoid the temptation to be slovenly in your mind and be deluded into calling it "depending on the Spirit." Don't misapply Matthew 10:19-20. Carelessness in spiritual matters is a crime.

Concentrate on Personal Resources

Neglect not the gift that is in thee. (1 Timothy 4:14)

In immediate preparation don't call in the aid of other minds; rely on the Holy Spirit and on your own resources, and He will select for you. Discipline your mind by reading and by building in stuff in private, then all that you have assimilated will come back. Keep yourself full to the brim in reading; but remember that the first great Resource is the Holy Ghost Who lays at your disposal the Word of God. The thing to prepare is not the sermon, but the preacher.

Constrain Yourself to Be Spiritually Minded

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

Follow after righteousness. (1 Timothy 6:11)

It is possible to have a saved and sanctified experience and a stagnant mind. Learn how to make your mind awake and fervid, and when once your mind is awake never let it go to sleep. The brain does not need rest, it only needs change of work. The intellect works with the greatest intensity when it works continuously; the more you do, the more you can do. We must work hard to keep in trim for God. Clean off the rust and keep bright by use.

Commune with God Continuously

Be instant in season, out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2)

You cannot always be in conscious glowing touch with God, but don't wait for ecstasy. See that you make all else secondary to the one purpose of your life. "My one aim is to preach Jesus by lip and life, and I will allow no other interest to dominate," then every other thing will be related to that purpose. "Instant in season, out of season"; never give way to discouragement.

The Preacher's Obligations



In other callings you have to work with men, but in this calling you work upon men; you come with the authority men crave for and yet resent.

A preacher must remember that his calling is different from every other calling in life; his personality has to be submerged in his message (cf. John 3:30). An orator has to work *with* men and enthuse them; a New Testament preacher has to come *upon* men with a message they resent and will not listen to at first. The Gospel comes in with a backing of Divine authority and an arrestment which men resent. There is something in every man that resents the interference of God. Before a man can be saved, the central citadel of his being has to be stormed and taken possession of by the Holy Spirit. It is easy to tell men they must be saved and filled with the Holy Ghost; but we have to live amongst men and show them what a life filled with the Holy Ghost ought to be. A preacher has to come upon men with a message and a testimony that go together. The great pattern for every witness is the abiding Witness, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down on men from above; He stood on our level, with what men never had, in order to save men.

To the Gospel (1 Peter 1:25)

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



*The Gospel is too profound for the lazy public;
too positive* for discursive thinkers.*

We have no right to preach unless we present the Gospel; we have not to advocate a cause or a creed or an experience, but to present the Gospel, and we cannot do that unless we have a personal testimony based on the Gospel. That is why so many preach what is merely the outcome of a higher form of culture. Until men get into a right relationship with God the Gospel is always in bad taste. There is a feeling of silent resentment, “Don’t talk about being born again and being sanctified; be vague.” “Do remember the people you are talking to.” “Preach the simple Gospel, the thing that keeps us sound asleep.” If you take the people as a standard, you will never preach the Gospel, it is too positive.* Our obligation to the Gospel is to preach it.

To the Church (Ephesians 5:27)

The Church does not lead the world nor echo it; she confronts it. Her note is the supernatural note.

* positive: independent; unrelated to anything else.

* positive: independent; unrelated to anything else.



THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The Church confronts the world with a message the world craves for but resents because it comes through the Cross of Christ. The central keystone for all Time and Eternity on which the whole purpose of God depends is the Cross (see Galatians 6:14). When the world gets in a bad way, she refers to the Church; when she is prosperous, she hates it. If men could blot out the standard of the Christian Church they would do so; but in a crisis they find a need in their own heart. As preachers we are privileged by God to stand steadfast against any element that lowers His standard. We are called upon to confront the world with the Gospel of Christ, not to start off on side tracks of our own.

The Church owns a mastery the world can neither ignore nor do without, the mastery of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Community (1 John 5:19)

You must tell men they cannot be right with each other except as they are right with God in Christ and in the atoning work of Christ.

Our Lord taught that men could only be right with each other as they are right with Him, and Jesus Christ can take any man and place him in right relationship with God.

Never water down or minimise the mighty Gospel of God by considering that people may be misled by certain statements. Present the Gospel in all its fullness and God will guard His own truth.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Don'ts and Do's about Texts

Don't be Clever. Do be Careful.

Don't be Do be Consecrated.
Controversial.

Don't be Do be Concentrated.
Conceited.

Don't Be Clever

Never choose a text, let the text choose you. Cleverness is the ability to do things better than anyone else. Always hide that light under a bushel. The Holy Ghost is never clever. In a child of God the Holy Spirit works as naturally as breathing, and the most unostentatious choices are His choices. Unless your personal life is hid with Christ in Go, natural ability will continually lead you into chastisement from God. When a text has chosen you, the Holy Spirit will impress you with its inner meaning and cause you to labour to lead out that meaning for your congregation.

Do Be Careful

Nothing that has been discovered by anyone else is of any use to you until you re-discover it. Be careful to use your own mental eyes, and the eyes

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



of those who can help you to see what you are looking at. Drummond* said that Ruskin taught him to *see*. Be careful to develop the power of perceiving what you look at, and never take an explanation from another mind unless you see it for yourself.

Don't Be Controversial

Never choose disputed texts; if you do, you are sure to cut yourself. The spirit that chooses disputed texts is the boldness born of impudence, not the fearlessness born of morality. Remember, God calls us to *proclaim the Gospel*. A man may increase his intellectual vim by controversy, but only one in a thousand can maintain his spiritual life and controvert. Never denounce a thing about which you know nothing.

Do Be Consecrated

Never forget who you are, what you have been, and what you may be by the grace of God. When you try and re-state to yourself what you implicitly feel to be God's truth, you give God a chance to pass that truth on to someone else through you.

Don't Be Conceited

Conceit means my own point of view and I don't care what anyone else says. "Be not wise in your own conceits," says Paul. Conceit makes the way God deals with me personally the binding standard for others. We are called to preach the Truth, Our

* Henry Drummond (1851-97), Scottish writer and evangelist.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Lord Jesus Christ, and we get decentralised from Him if we become specialists.

Do Be Concentrated

Strenuous mental effort to interpret the word of God will fag us out physically, whereas strenuous mental effort that lets the word of God talk to us will re-create us. We prefer the spiritual interpretation to the exegetical because it does not need any work. We are to be “workmen” for God, not take God’s word to feed ourselves. The preacher has to concentrate on what God’s word says; he is dealing with a written revelation, not an unwritten one. The reason we have no “open vision” is that in some domain we have disobeyed God. Immediately we obey, the word is opened up. The atmosphere of the Christian is God Himself, and in ordinary times as well as exceptional times He brings words to us. When He does not, never deceive yourself, something is wrong and needs curing, just as there would be something wrong if you could not get your breath. Supernatural manifestations of guidance are exceptional. The normal way of the Spirit of God is the way He worked in the life of Jesus Christ. Maintain your personal relationship with God at all costs. Never allow anything to come between your soul and God, and welcome anyone or anything that leads you to know Him better.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

First Things First

The Absoluteness of Christ (Philippians 2:8)

As a preacher, allow no quarter to anyone who pretends he can give any other explanation of Jesus Christ than He gives of Himself. Jesus Christ calls Himself “the Son of Man,” i.e., Representative Man. Never make the Absoluteness of Christ mean the Absoluteness of God; they are not the same. The holiness of God Almighty is Absolute, it knows no development by antagonism; the holiness exhibited by the Son of Man expresses itself by means of antagonism. The words Our Lord uses of Himself show that His obedience was of a moral nature, it was not a mechanical obedience.

We must look upon Christ as a real historic figure, a real man, not a magical prodigy. He shared in the life of limited man, the life of His age and the life of His land. The limitation of His consciousness was no limitation of His moral power but its exercise.

In presenting Jesus Christ never present Him as a miraculous Being Who came down from heaven and worked miracles and Who was not related to life as we are; that is not the Gospel Christ. The Gospel Christ is the Being Who came down to earth and lived our life and was possessed of a frame like ours. He became Man in order to show the relationship

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



man was to hold to God, and by His death and resurrection He can put any man into that relationship. Jesus Christ is the last word in human nature.

The Absoluteness of the New Testament (1 Peter 1:16-21)

The doctrines of the New Testament as applied to personal life are moral doctrines, that is, they are understood by a pure heart, not by the intellect. “I want to know God’s will in this matter” you say, and your next step is into a fog! because the only way to understand the will of God is to obey from the heart, it is a moral discernment (see Romans 12:2). My spiritual character determines the revelation of God to me.

In the New Testament we deal not with the shrewd guesses of able men, but with a supernatural revelation, and only as we transact business on that revelation do the moral consequences result in us. The danger is to preach a subjective theology, i.e. that something wells up on the inside. The Gospel of the New Testament is based on the absoluteness of revelation, we cannot get at it by our common sense. If a man is to be saved it must be from outside, God never pumps up anything from within. As a preacher, base on nothing less than revelation, and the authenticity of the revelation depends on the character of the one who brings it. Our Lord Jesus Christ put His impress on every revelation from Genesis to Revelation.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Absoluteness of Immorality and Holiness (Revelation 21:7-8)

Immorality and holiness are absolute, you cannot get behind them. When Our Lord talks about the radical evil of the human heart (e.g. Mark 7:21-22), it is a revelation we know nothing of; it comes to the shores of our lives in immorality and holiness. Immorality has its seat in every one of us, not in some of us. If a man is not holy, he is immoral, no matter how good he may seem. Immorality is at the basis of the whole thing; if it does not show itself outwardly, it will show itself before God. The New Testament teaches that no man or woman is safe apart from Jesus Christ because there is treachery on the inside. **“Out of the heart of men, proceed. . . .”* The majority of us are grossly ignorant about the possibilities of evil in the heart. Never trust your common sense when the statements of Jesus contradict it, and when you preach see that you base your preaching on the revelation of Jesus Christ, not on the sweet innocence of human nature. When you hear a man cry out, like the publican of old, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” you have the problem of the whole universe. That man has reached the realisation of himself at last, he knows that he is a guilty, immoral type of man and needs saving. Never take anyone to be good, and above all never take yourself to be good. Natural goodness will always break, always disappoint, why? Because the Bible tells us that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Never trust anything in yourself that God has not placed there through the regeneration of Our Lord

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

Jesus Christ; and never trust anything saving that in anyone else.

That is the stern platform you have to stand on when you present the truth of God, and it will resolve you on to a lonely platform, because your message will be craved for but its way of being presented will be resented. The Gospel of Jesus Christ awakens an intense craving and an equally intense resentment. Base on personal love for the Lord, not on personal love for men. Personal love for men will make you call immorality a weakness, and holiness a mere aspiration; personal love for the Lord will make you call immorality devilish, and holiness the only thing that can stand in the light of God. The only safety for the preacher is to face his soul not with his people, or even with his message, but to face his soul with his Saviour all the time.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Origin of Our Salvation

2 Peter 1:16

Revelation is not primarily in my soul, but in a fact which is in the chain of history.

In preaching the Gospel remember that salvation is the great thought of God, not an experience. Experience is the gateway through which salvation comes into our conscious life, the evidence of a right relationship to Jesus Christ. Never preach experience, preach the great thought of God that lies behind. People stagnate because they never get beyond the image of their experiences into the life of God which transcends all experience. Jesus Christ Himself is the Revelation, and all our experiences must be traced back to Him and kept there.

The Supernaturalness of Our Salvation (Ephesians 1:7; John 3:7-8)

The Gospel is a gift to our poverty, not a triumph of our resource.

Beware of a false spirituality that is not based on the rugged facts of our religion. One rugged fact is the forgiveness of sins—"we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

sins.” Forgiveness is the Divine miracle of grace. Have we ever contemplated the amazing fact that God through the Death of Jesus Christ forgives us for every wrong we have ever done, not because we are sorry, but out of His sheer mercy? God’s forgiveness is only natural in the supernatural domain. Another rugged fact is the need for new birth—“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again,” that is, you must be invaded by the Spirit of God by means of a supernatural recreation. Being born again of the Spirit is an unmistakable work of God, as mysterious as the wind. Beware of the tendency to water down the supernatural in religion.

The Essence of Our Salvation (Ephesians 4:13-16)

Man’s extremity elicits the central resources of God the Saviour.

Personality sometimes hinders the Gospel, people are swept off their feet not by the truth presented but by the tremendous force of the personality that presents it. Personality is used by God to emphasise a neglected truth, but the Toms, Dicks and Harrys are the ones used to spread a knowledge of salvation amongst men. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” That is the only standard for the preacher of the Gospel. John the Baptist is stating the truth that we have no right as preachers on the ground of our personality, but only because of the message we proclaim.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



We have to bring an Absolute Christ to the needs of men, not to their conditions.

So many preach the human aspect of Christ, His sympathy for the bereaved and the suffering and sin-stained, and men listen whilst Christ is brought down to their conditions; but a preacher has to bring the Gospel of God to men's needs, and to do this he has to uncover their need and men resent this—"I don't want to accept the verdict on myself that Jesus Christ brings; I don't believe I am so sinful as He reveals." A man never believes what Jesus Christ says about the human heart until the Holy Ghost gives him the startling revelation of the truth of His diagnosis (see Mark 7:20-23).

Paul was never appealed to fundamentally by the distresses of men, he was appealed to only by the Cross of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:2). There are any number of people who awaken sympathy for the conditions of men and speak of the tragedy of human life to the one who presents the tragedy of Redemption, a broken-hearted God.

As a preacher, never remember the conditions of men, remember only the rugged facts of our salvation, and never attempt to guard them.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Cross in Discipleship

The Cross in Discipleship That Affronts (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:60-61)

There is a method of making disciples which is not sanctioned by Our Lord. It is an excessive pressing of people to be reconciled to God in a way that is unworthy of the dignity of the Gospel. The pleading is on the line of: Jesus has done so much for us, cannot we do something out of gratitude to Him? This method of getting people into relationship to God out of pity for Jesus is never recognised by Our Lord. It does not put sin in its right place, nor does it put the more serious aspect of the Gospel in its right place. Our Lord never pressed anyone to follow Him unconditionally; nor did He wish to be followed merely out of an impulse of enthusiasm. He never pleaded, He never entrapped; He made discipleship intensely narrow, and pointed out certain things which could never be in those who followed Him. To-day there is a tendency to take the harshness out of Our Lord's statements. What Jesus says *is* hard; it is only easy when it comes to those who are His disciples. Whenever Our Lord talked about discipleship He prefaced it with an "IF," never with an emphatic assertion, "You must." Discipleship carries an option with it.

The aspect of the cross in discipleship is lost altogether in the present-day view of following Jesus. The cross is looked upon as something

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



beautiful and simple instead of a stern heroism. Our Lord never said it was easy to be a Christian; He warned men that they would have to face a variety of hardships, which He termed bearing the cross.

The time when Jesus comes to us is not so much in a revival issue, a time when He is in the ascendant, but rather at a time when we are in the ascendant, when our wills are perfectly free, when the fascination and beauty of the world on the one hand and the repelling aspect of Jesus Christ on the other is there. Our Lord never allows an allegiance which is the outcome of an impulse of enthusiasm that sweeps us off our feet, not knowing what we are doing. We must be at the balance of our wills when we choose. That is why the call of Jesus Christ awakens an immense craving and an intense resentment, and that is why as New Testament preachers we must always push an issue of will.

The Cross in Discipleship in Appreciation (Matthew 16:24)

The next time you read those words, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me,"[†] strip them of all their poetry. It is an effort to us to think of the cross as Our Lord thought of it. When Jesus said "let him deny himself, and take up his cross,"[†] He had in mind not a thing of beautiful sentiment to arouse heroism, but an ugly cruel thing, with awful nails that tore the flesh. For twenty centuries people have covered up the Cross with sentiment, and we can sit and listen to the preaching of the crucifixion of Jesus and be dissolved in tears, but very few of us have

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



any appreciation of what our Lord conveyed when He said, “let him deny himself, and take his cross, and follow Me.”^{††}

The Cross of Christ stands unique and alone; we are never called upon to carry His Cross. Our cross is something that comes only with the peculiar relationship of a disciple to Jesus Christ, it is the evidence that we have denied the right to ourselves. Our Lord was not talking about suffering for conscience’ sake or conviction’s sake; men suffer for conscience’ sake who know nothing about Jesus Christ and own Him no allegiance; men suffer for conviction’s sake, if they are worth their salt, whether they are Christians or not. The Cross of Jesus Christ is a revelation; our cross is an experience.

What the Cross was to Our Lord such also in measure was it to be to those who followed Him. The cross is the pain involved in doing the will of God. That aspect is being lost sight of, we say that after sanctification all is a delight. Was Paul’s life all delight? Was Our Lord’s life all delight? Discipleship means we are identified with His interests, and we have to fill up “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.” Only when we have been identified with Our Lord in sanctification can we begin to understand what our cross means.

The Cross in Discipleship in Aggression (Matthew 10:16-39)

These verses need to be re-read because we are apt to think that Jesus Christ took all the bitterness

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

and we get all the blessing. It is true that we get the blessing, but we must never forget that the wine of life is made out of crushed grapes; to follow Jesus will involve bruising in the lives of the disciples as the purpose of God did in His own life. The thing that makes us whimper is that we will look for justice. If you look for justice in your Christian work you will soon put yourself in a bandage and give way to self-pity and discouragement. Never look for justice, but never cease to give it; and never allow anything you meet with to sour your relationship to men through Jesus Christ. "Love . . . as I have loved you."

In Matthew 10:34 Jesus told the disciples that they would be opposed not only in private life, but that the powers of state would oppose them and they would have to suffer persecution, and some even crucifixion. Don't say, "But that was simply meant for those days." If you stand true to Jesus Christ you will find that the world will react against you with a butt, not with a caress, annoyed and antagonistic (see John 15:18-20).

When Our Lord spoke of the cross His disciples were to bear, He did not say that if they bore it they would become holy; He said the cross was to be borne for His sake, not for theirs. He also said that they would suffer in the same way as the prophets suffered, because of the messages they spoke from God (see Matthew 5:11-12). The tendency to-day is to say, "Live a holy life, but don't talk about it; don't give your testimony; don't confess your allegiance to Jesus, and you will be left alone."

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Cross in Discipleship in Antagonism (Matthew 5:16; 10:32)

“Whosoever therefore shall confess Me . . . ,” i.e., confess Me by lip and by life. People are not persecuted for living a holy life, it is the confession of Jesus that brings the persecution. There is a great deal of social work done to-day that does not confess Jesus, although people may praise Him to further orders;* and if you confess Him there, you will find the ostracism He mentions: “Keep your religion out; don’t bring your jargon of sanctification here.” You must take it there, and when you do, the opposition will be tremendous. The reason for the opposition is that men have vested interests which philanthropy and kindness to humanity do not touch, but which the Spirit of Jesus testified to by human lips does touch, and indignation is awakened against the one who dares to carry the cross for his Lord there.

Self-denial and self-sacrifice are continually spoken of as being good in themselves; Our Lord never used any such affectation. He aimed a blow at the mistake that self-denial is an end in itself. He spoke of self-denial and self-sacrifice as painful things that cost and hurt (see Matthew 10:38-39). The term self-denial has come to mean giving up things; the denial Jesus speaks of is a denial right out to my right to myself, a clean sweep of all the decks to the mastership of Jesus. Some folks are so mixed up nervously that they cannot help sacrificing

* to further orders: ad infinitum; endlessly; the phrase, military origin, continuing present action until one receives different orders

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



themselves, but unless Jesus Christ is the lodestar there is no benefit in the sacrifice. Self-denial must have its spring in personal outflowing love to Our Lord; we are no longer our own, we are spoilt for every other interest in life saving as we can win men to Jesus Christ. The one great spring of sacrifice is devotion to Jesus, "For My sake."^{††}

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Reason Why

The reason why the apostle Paul was a preacher was because of his understanding of the Cross of Christ. The majority of present-day preachers understand only the blessings that come to us from the Cross, they are apt to be devoted to certain doctrines which flow from the Cross. Paul preached one thing only, the crucified Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

The Cross of Christ for Doctrine (1 Corinthians 1:23)

Never confuse the Cross of Christ with the benefits that flow from it. For all Paul's doctrine, his one great passion was the Cross of Christ, not salvation, nor sanctification, but the great truth that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; consequently you never find him artificial, or making a feeble statement. Every doctrine Paul taught had the blood and the power of God in it. There is an amazing force of spirit in all he said because the great passion behind was not that he wanted men to be holy, that was secondary, but that he had come to understand what God meant by the Cross of Christ. If we have only the idea of personal holiness, of being put in God's show room, we shall never come anywhere near seeing what God wants; but when once we have come where Paul is and God is enabling us to understand what

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



the Cross of Christ means, then nothing can ever turn us (see Romans 8:35-39). If Paul had been set on his own holiness, he never would have said, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren." He cared about nothing on earth, saving one thing—the Cross of Christ. That was the great passion of his preaching, he paid no attention to what it cost him. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Paul's preaching was a necessity laid upon him.

The Cross of Christ for Direction (1 Corinthians 2:2)

The direction of Paul's sentiment, amongst saints or sinners, was never pathetic and pious, but passionately taken up with Christ crucified. What direction does my preaching take? What direction do my letters take, my dreams? What direction does the whole trend of my life take? Paul says he is determined that his life shall take no other direction than this: the emphasis on and exposition of the Cross of Christ. That is the note that is being lost sight of in our preaching to-day. We hear any amount about our cross, about what it costs us to follow Christ; but who amongst us has any inkling of what the apostle Paul saw? He had caught an understanding of the mind of God in the Cross of Christ and grasped it, consequently he could never be exhausted or turned aside.

You cannot be profoundly moved by a sentiment or by an idea of holiness, but you can be moved by a passion; and the old writers used to speak of the Cross as the Passion of Our Lord. The Cross is the

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES





great opening through which all the blood of Christian service runs. Do we bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in our preaching, or do we leave our congregations with the impression of how sweet and winsome we are? Whether Paul's words were stinging or comforting, for praise or for condemnation, the one impression left was Jesus Christ and Him crucified, not Jesus Christ risen and exalted, but *crucified*. The reason some of us have no power in our preaching, no sense of awe, is that we have no passion for God, but only a passion for Humanity. The one thing we have to do is to exhibit Jesus Christ crucified, to lift Him up all the time. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Paul had one passion only, he had seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? God exalted in Christ crucified.

The Cross of Christ for Disposition (Galatians 6:14)

Paul disposed his whole life and all his interests in the light of his understanding of the Cross of Christ. Never take these words to mean Paul's identification with the death of Christ only. ". . . by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"—because of my identification with the death of Jesus? No, because Jesus Christ was crucified to the world. If we deal only with our identification, we lose sight of the objective fact of Our Lord's death. The profoundest truth to us is shallow compared with the revelation given here. Most of our emphasis to-day is on what our Lord's death means to us: the thing that is of importance is that we understand

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



what God means in the Cross. Paul did not understand the Cross in order that he might receive the life of God; but by understanding the Cross, he received the life. Study the Cross for no other sake than God's sake, and you will be holy without knowing it. The danger is to fix our eyes on our own whiteness. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Are we lifting up what Jesus Christ can do in the place of His Cross? That snare besets us until we learn the passion of Paul's life.

The call to preach is not because I have a special gift, or because Jesus has sanctified me, but that I have had a glimpse of God's meaning in the Cross, and life can never be the same again. The passion of Paul's preaching is the suffering of God Almighty exhibited in the Cross of Christ. Many who are working for God ought to be learning in the School of Calvary. Paul says—"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"—not myself crucified with Christ, that is a mere *et cetera*; the one Figure left is Jesus Christ, and His Cross.

The Cross of Christ and Discipline (Galatians 2:20)

This is not a theological statement, it is a statement of Christian experience wrought by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the one Who regenerates us into the family to which Jesus Christ belongs; through the eternal efficacy of the Cross we are made partakers of the Divine nature. "I have been crucified with Christ" (rv). Paul's personal identification with the death of Christ is simply the

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

presentation of how that death will work out in the life of anyone. The Cross of Christ is the Self-revelation of God, the exhibition of the essential nature of the Godhead.

Nowadays the great passion is the passion for souls, but you never find that passion mentioned in the New Testament, it is the passion for Christ that the New Testament mentions. It is not a passion for men that saves men; a passion for men breaks human hearts. The passion for Christ inwrought by the Holy Ghost goes deeper down than the deepest agony the world, the flesh and the devil can produce. It goes straight down to where Our Lord went, and the Holy Ghost works out, not in thinking, but in living, this passion for Christ. Whenever the passion for souls obscures the passion for Christ, Satan has come in as an angel of light.

Be Sure of the Abysses of God

As Christian workers we must never forget that salvation is God's thought, not man's; therefore it is an unfathomable abyss. Salvation is not an experience; experience is only a gateway by which salvation comes into our conscious lives. We have to preach the great thought of God behind the experience.

Judgment on the Abyss of Love (1 Peter 4:17)

Never sympathise with a soul who finds it difficult to get to God; God is never to blame. We have to so present the truth that the Spirit of God will show

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

what is wrong. The element of judgment must always come out; it is the sign of God's love. The great sterling test in preaching is that it brings everyone to judgment; the Spirit of God locates each one. Never allow in yourself or in others the phrase "I can't"; it is unconscious blasphemy. If I put my inability as a barrier, I am telling God there is something He has not taken into account. Every element of self-reliance must be slain by the power of God. The people who say "I can't" are those who have a remnant of self-reliance left; a true saint never says "I can't," because it never occurs to him that he can! Complete weakness is always the occasion of the Spirit of God manifesting His power. Never allow anything to be in you that the Cross of Christ condemns.

Conscience on the Abyss of the Cross (2 Corinthians 5:10-12)

The most universal thing among men is conscience, and the Cross is God's conscience in supreme energy.

Conscience must be educated at the Cross. As a worker always bring the conscience of others to face the Cross of Christ. Is my life worthy of what Jesus Christ did on the Cross? Are there the elements of ability and power and peace stamped with the almightiness that comes through the Cross? If not, I am not where I should be. The Cross of Christ means that the Spirit of God can empower me almightily until

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



*every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.*

We imagine we have to do these things for ourselves; we have not, we have to keep steadily in the light of the Cross, relying on the Spirit of God, then we will live out the life He wants us to live. Whenever we get our eyes off Christ and His Cross and build up on our own experience, “Now God has sanctified me, I am all right,” we become betrayers of the very power that saved us. When we walk in the light, with the whole of our attention taken up with Jesus Christ, there is manifested in us a holiness that glorifies God in every particular. Never get off on the intellectual line, “Think proper thoughts.” *Live proper lives!* and you will think proper thoughts.

The Cross of Christ is the Self-revelation of God, the way God has given Himself. In the preaching and writing of to-day there is much brilliant stuff that passes into thin air because it is not related to this tremendous fact of the Self-bestowal of God that lifts up humanity to be in accord with Himself.

Morality on the Abyss of the Atonement (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES





The mind of the worker must brood much on the Atonement because every bit of our life, physical, moral and spiritual, must be judged by the standard of the Atonement, viz., holiness. Never say God's holiness does not mean what it does mean. It means every part of the life under the scrutiny of God, knowing that the grace of God is sufficient for every detail. The temptation comes along the line of compromise, "Don't be so unbendingly holy; so fiercely pure and uprightly chaste." Never tolerate by sympathy with yourself or with others any practice that is not in keeping with a holy God.

Liberty on the Abyss of the Gospel (Galatians 5:1)

We have to present the liberty of Christ, and we cannot do it if we are not free ourselves. There is only one liberty, the liberty of Jesus Christ at work in my conscience enabling me to do what is right. If we are free with the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, slowly and surely those whom we influence will begin to be free with the same freedom. Always keep your own life measured by the standard of Jesus Christ; bow your neck to His yoke alone and to no other yoke whatever; and see that you never bind any yoke on others that Jesus Christ Himself does not place. It takes a long time to get us out of imagining that unless people see as we do they must be wrong. That is never Jesus Christ's view. Our true sympathy lies with the One Who is absolute tenderness, and every now and again God gives us the chance of being the rugged stuff that He might be the tender One. We have to be sacramental elements in the Lord's hands.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

What Is Following Jesus Christ?

The Still Small Voice[†] (Matthew 4:19)

In the days of His flesh the invitation to follow Jesus Christ was a definite one. It meant doing as Peter said, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee” (Mark 10:28[†]). This literal following of Jesus is no longer necessary; what men are called on to forsake to-day is sin and worldliness. Never say you do not know where these things take up their abode. Get down before God and say, “Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?” and He will show you why not in a flash. “But,” you say, “it cannot be that, it is far too small a thing.” It is just that and nothing else. Never believe any being on earth if he contradicts the Holy Ghost. Whatever the Holy Ghost detects in you, trace it down, and you will find the whole disposition of sin, i.e., my claim to my right to myself, is at the basis of that infinitesimal thing of which our mind says, “But it cannot be that.”

The Silent Sure Vision (Mark 4:34; cf. Luke 10:39)

Have you ever been alone with Jesus? The disciples enjoyed the inestimable privilege not only of hearing the truth from Our Lord’s own lips, but of questioning Him in secret about everything He said. We go to John Wesley, or to Adam Clarke,^{*} or some other commentator instead of going to Jesus Himself. How can we go to Him? The Holy Spirit is

[†] Adam Clarke (1762-1832), eighteenth-century Methodist leader in Britain, author of an influential six-volume commentary on the Bible.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

the Exponent of Jesus Christ's statements, and He will test whether the expositions are of God or not. Jesus Christ's teaching is involved in such a manner that only the Holy Spirit can extricate its meaning for us. "He will guide you into all truth." The Holy Spirit never witnesses to a clever interpretation; the exposition the Holy Spirit will witness to is always amazingly and profoundly simple; you feel, "That certainly is God's truth." Whenever you are without that feeling about an interpretation, hesitate, keep your judgment in abeyance. Don't force your head to argue, but get alone with Jesus and ask Him. If He keeps you waiting, He knows why He does so. Discernment of God's truth and development in spiritual character go together.

In the Sermon on the Mount Our Lord emphasises the principle that continuous instruction turns hearers into disciples (see Matthew 7:24). Irregular listeners are turned into lop-sided fanatics. Many to-day are not following Jesus Christ, they have one glowing bit of light about salvation or sanctification or healing and they say, "Follow me, I am right." Jesus says, "Lift Me up." We have to learn to sit at the feet of Jesus in our disposition. The one thing needful is continuous instruction in His word. Listen to the words Jesus spoke, and let the Holy Spirit instruct you. Be at it steadily. Don't be a hearer only, but become a disciple. Experience is never your guide; experience is the doorway for you to know the Author of the experience. Get at the knowledge of God for yourself, be a continuous learner, and the truth will open on the right hand and on the left until you find there is not a problem in human life that Jesus Christ cannot deal with.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The Slow Steps in the Valley (Luke 14:33)



To follow Jesus Christ to-day is to follow a madman according to the ideals of present-day civilisation. We have the idea that our civilisation is God-ordained, whereas it has been built up by ourselves. We have made a thousand and one necessities until our system of civilised life is as cast iron, and then we apologise to the Lord for not following Him. "God can never mean that I have to follow Him at the cost of all I have?" But He does mean it. Instantly the clash is between our civilisation and the call of Jesus Christ. Read the Sermon on the Mount—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God"[†]—and apply it to modern life and you will find its statements are either those of a madman or of God Incarnate.

The book entitled *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis is exquisitely beautiful, but fundamentally twisted, because Our Lord's own message of regeneration is ignored. Many a one who has started the imitation of Christ has had to abandon it as hopeless because a strain is put on human nature that human nature cannot begin to live up to. To have attitudes of life without the life itself is a fraud; to have the life itself imitating the best Pattern of that life is normal and right (see 1 Peter 2:21-23). The teaching of Jesus Christ applies only to the life He puts in, and the marvel of His Redemption is that He gives the power of His own disposition to carry any man through who is willing to obey Him.

God's

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES





*The vows of God are on me, and I may not
stay
To play with shadows, or pluck earthly flower,
Till I my work have done.
And rendered up account.*

The Disciplined Life (2 Timothy 2:3)

The first requirement of the worker is discipline voluntarily entered into. It is easy to be passionate, easy to be thrilled by spiritual influences, but it takes a heart in love with Jesus Christ to put the feet in His footprints, and to square the life to a steady going “up to Jerusalem”[†] with Him. Discipline is the one thing the modern Christian knows nothing of, we won’t stand discipline nowadays. God has given me an experience of His life and grace, therefore I am a law unto myself. The discipline of a worker is not in order to develop his own life, but for the purposes of his Commander. The reason there is so much failure is because we forget that we are here for that one thing, loyalty to Jesus Christ; otherwise we have no business to have taken the vows of God upon us. If a soldier is not prepared to be killed, he has no business to have enlisted as a soldier. The only way to keep true to God is by a steady persistent refusal to be interested in Christian work and to be interested alone in Jesus Christ.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

A disciplined life means three things—a supreme aim incorporated into the life itself; an external law binding on the life from its Commander; and absolute loyalty to God and His word as the ingrained attitude of heart and mind. There must be no insubordination; every impulse, every emotion, every illumination must be rigorously handled and checked if it is not in accordance with God and His word.

Our Lord Himself is the example of a disciplined life. He lived a holy life by sacrificing Himself to His Father; His words and His thinking were holy because He submitted His intelligence to His Father's word, and He worked the works of God because He steadily submitted His will to His Father's will^{†††}; and as is the Master, so is the disciple.[†]

The Disentangled Life (2 Timothy 2:4; Numbers 6:2-3)

A disciple of Jesus must know from what he is to be disentangled. The disentanglement is from things which would be right for us but for the fact that we have taken upon us the vows of God. There is a difference between disentanglement for our own soul's sake and disentanglement for God's sake. We are apt to think only about being disentangled from the things which would ensnare us—we give up this and that, not for Jesus Christ's sake, but for our own development. A worker has to disentangle himself from many things that would advantage and develop him but which would turn him aside from being broken bread and poured out wine in his

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Lord's hands. We are not here to develop our own spiritual life, but to be broken for Jesus Christ's sake. There is much that would advantage and develop us and make us more desirable than we are, but if we have taken the vows of God upon ourselves, those considerations must never enter in. Paul argues in this way: If anything in me, right or wrong, is hindering God's work and causing another to stumble, I will give it up, even if it is the most legitimate thing on earth (see 1 Corinthians 8:13). People say, "Why cannot I do this?" For pity's sake do it! There is no reason why you shouldn't, there is neither right nor wrong about it; but if your love for Jesus Christ is not sufficient to disentangle you from a thousand and one things that would develop you, you know nothing about being His servant.

The appeal made in Christian work nowadays is that we must keep ourselves fit for our work, we must not; we must be in the hands of God for God to do exactly what He likes with us, and that means disentanglement from everything that would hinder His purpose. If you want to remain a full-orbed grape you must keep out of God's hands for He will crush you, wine cannot be had in any other way. The curse in Christian work is that we want to preserve ourselves in God's museum; what God wants is to see where Jesus Christ's men and women are. The saints are always amongst the unofficial crowd, the crowd that is not noticed, and their one dominant note is Jesus Christ.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Detached Life (2 Timothy 2:4; Leviticus 21:12)

The worker must live a life detached to God, and the illustration of the detached life is that of a priest who intercedes. The reason so few of us intercede is because we do not understand that intercession is a vicarious work. It is not meant to develop us; it is vicarious from beginning to end.

The detached life is the result of an intensely narrow moral purity, not of a narrow mind. The mental view of Jesus Christ was as big as God's view, consequently He went anywhere—to marriage feasts, into the social life of His time, because His morality was absolutely pure; and that is what God wants of us. In the beginning we are fanatical and we cut ourselves off from external things, until we learn that detachment is the outcome of an inner moral purity, inwrought by God and maintained by walking in the light. Then God can put us where He likes, in the foreign field or anywhere, and we will never be entangled—placed there, but detached. Whenever we make our personal convictions the standard for a society or a class, we take them the first step away from Christ, and that will happen every time the light we are walking in is not the light of God. It is enough to make the heart of a stone bleed to see royal souls turning away from God in their very eagerness to serve Him, and entering into worldliness instead of standing absolutely detached.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Discerning Life (2 Timothy 2:6; Isaiah 28:23-28)

The worker has to have discernment like that of a farmer, that is, he must know how to watch, how to wait, and how to work with wonder. The farmer does not wait with folded arms but with intense activity, he keeps at it industriously until the harvest.

When someone comes to you with a question which makes you feel at your wits' end, never say, "I can't make head or tail of it." Of course you cannot. Always take the case that is too hard for you to God, and to no one else, and He will give you the right thing to say. When you are being taught by God to discern, you will deal with the case in the way that God has prompted you to and you will speak with discernment. When you are used of God it is not because you discern what is wrong, but because the Holy Spirit gives you discernment, and as you speak you realise in what an amazing way the words meet the case, and you say, "I wonder why I said that?" Don't wonder any more, it was the Spirit of God inspiring you. When we are used, we never know we are used, and the times we expect to be used, we are not. We have to keep our heads out of the rush of things in order that the Spirit of God may discern through us.

The discernment for the worker himself is I am *God's*, therefore I am good for no one else; not good for nothing, but good for no other calling in life. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." If you have taken on you the vows of God, never be surprised

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

at the misery and turmoil that come every time you turn aside. Other people may do a certain thing and prosper, but you cannot, and God will take care you do not. There is always one fact more known only to God.

The one word to be written indelibly on each one of us is "God's." There is no responsibility in the life that is there, it is full of speechless child-like delight in God. Whenever a worker breaks down it is because he has taken responsibility upon himself which was never God's will for him to take. "Think of the responsibility it will be for you!" There is no responsibility whatever, saving that of refusing to take the responsibility. The responsibility that would rest on you if you took it would crush you to the dust; but when you know God you take no responsibility upon yourself, you are as free as a child, and the life is one of concentration on God. "Cast that He hath given thee upon the Lord" (Psalm 55:22 rv mg). The thing that interferes with the life with God is our abominable seriousness which chokes the freedom and simplicity which ought to mark the life. The freedom and simplicity spring from one point only, a heart at rest with God and at leisure from itself.

None of this is experience, it is a life; experience is the door that opens into the life. When we have had an experience the snare is that we want to go back to it. Leave experiences alone, let them come or go. God wants our lives to be absolutely centred in Himself. "We cannot kindle when we will the fire which in the heart resides," God gives us marvellous hours of insight, then He withdraws them, and we

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



have to begin to work out “with aching hands and bleeding feet” what we saw in vision, and few understand this.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Identification

Identification is not experienceable; it is infinitely more fundamental than experience. Identification is a revelation, the exposition of the experience. We must get out of the way of bringing everything to the bar of personal experience. Remember two things: first, experience is not its own cause; and second, there must be a standard revelation whereby to account for our experiences. The standard revelation with regard to identification is Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the phases of our experience must always be traced back to this revelation. Jesus Christ must always be infinitely greater than any experience of Him.

Incarnation. The Word Made Weak. God-Man (John 1:14)

Jesus Christ was not a Being Who became Divine, He was the Godhead Incarnated; He emptied Himself of His glory in becoming Incarnate. Never separate the Incarnation from the Atonement. The Incarnation was not meant to enable God to realise Himself, but that man might realise God and gain readjustment to Him. Jesus Christ became Man for one purpose, that He might put away sin and bring the whole human race back into the oneness of identification. Jesus Christ is not an individual iota of a man; He is the whole of the human race centred before God in one Person: He is God and Man in one. Man is lifted up to God in Christ, and God is

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



brought down to man in Christ. Jesus Christ nowhere said, “He that hath seen *man* hath seen the Father”; but He did say that God was manifest in human flesh in His own Person (John 14:9) that He might become the generating centre for the same manifestation in every human being, and the place of His travail pangs is the Incarnation, Calvary, and the Resurrection.

Identification. The Son Made Sin. God and Man (2 Corinthians 5:21)

What these verses express is beyond the possibility of human experience; they refer only to the experience of Our Lord. The revelation is not that Jesus Christ was punished for our sins, but that, “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” that by His identification with it and removal of it, “we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” God made His own Son to be sin that He might make the sinner a saint. The Bible reveals all through that Jesus Christ bore the sin of the world by *identification*, not by sympathy. He deliberately took upon Himself and bore in His own Person the whole massed sin of the human race, and by so doing He rehabilitated the human race, that is, put it back to where God designed it to be, and anyone can enter into union with God on the ground of what Our Lord did on the Cross.

Invasion. The Sinner Made Saint. God in Man (Galatians 2:20)

Galatians 2:20 is the scriptural expression of identification with Jesus Christ in such a way that the

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



whole life is changed. Paul says that his destiny is no longer self-realisation, but Christ-identity, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

The revelation of identification means that we are one with God in His Son, not by obedience, obedience is nothing more than the human approach to this mightiest of revelations. We enter into identification by the door of obedience and faith, but the oneness is a revelation. When we do touch God we lose all consciousness of being in conscious touch with Him, we are so absorbed with His peace and power that language cannot convey the assurance of the oneness. The experience of sanctification is simply the entrance into this relationship.

The Self-realisation of Jesus Christ—an entrancing subject to every Christian—is our Redemption; and the way in which we are to be identified experimentally with Jesus Christ is revealed in His Self-realisation. “Partakers of Christ’s sufferings”; “as He is, so are we in this world”; “. . . and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.” The one absorbing passion of the life is for Him.

“Oh, but I don’t feel worthy.” Of course you are not worthy! Not all your praying or obedience can ever make you worthy. Leave yourself absolutely in His hands, and see that you plunge yourself deep down in faith on the revelation that you are made one with God through the Redemption of Jesus Christ.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES