



❖

THE SERVANT AS HIS LORD

❖



❖

OSWALD CHAMBERS

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Servant as His Lord

Oswald Chambers

Copyright: Oswald Chambers Publication
Association 1959

Scripture versions quoted: kjv, rv

Introduction

The Servant as His Lord

Source

Talks and lectures given at League of Prayer* meetings, at the Bible Training College,* and to British Commonwealth soldiers in Egypt during 1916 and 1917.

Publication History

The messages in this book were published individually in the “sixpenny series” before being combined into one volume in 1959. Over the years, Mrs. Chambers amalgamated a number of smaller

* Pentecostal League of Prayer: founded in London in 1891 by Reader Harris (1847-1909), prominent barrister; friend and mentor of Oswald Chambers.

* Bible Training College: Residential school near Clapham Common in SW London, sponsored by the League of Prayer. Oswald Chambers was Principal and main teacher; Bidy Chambers was Lady Superintendent. Known as the BTC, it opened in 1911 and closed in July 1915 because of World War I.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

books into combined volumes to keep them in print in the most economical format.

- The Fighting Chance: These talks on Romans 8:35-39 were given to a League of Prayer* audience in London. They were published as a booklet in 1935.
- The Soul of a Christian: OC gave these lectures at the Bible Training College* from January 21 through March 25, 1915. The material was published as articles in the *BTC Journal*,* October 1934 through March 1935, then as a booklet in 1936.
- The Saints in the Disaster of Worldliness: These were talks to British Commonwealth soldiers in Egypt during 1916 and 1917. They were published as articles in *Spiritual Life* magazine: November and December 1937, “The Saints in the Disaster of Worldliness”; June 1938, “Out of the Wreck I Rise” (on Romans 8:37); July 1938, “The Conditions of Spiritual Life” (on Matthew 10:24-42). As a booklet, they were published under the title *The Patience of the Saints* in 1939.
- The Sacrament of Saints: These lectures were given in the sermon class OC taught at the Bible Training College,* London. They were published as a booklet in 1934, subtitled, “The Making of Saints under the Parable of Bread.”

* Pentecostal League of Prayer: founded in London in 1891 by Reader Harris (1847-1909), prominent barrister; friend and mentor of Oswald Chambers.

* Bible Training College (BTC), London, 1911-1915.

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

* Bible Training College (BTC), London, 1911-1915.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Foreword

This book has a message for our time. There is much discernment of the state of our age at its closing period. "What is described in the climax is true in every stage till the climax is reached." Jesus Christ foretold tribulation to His followers. But God gives us a fighting chance of winning through to triumph; and there is much here to nourish and guide His saints in their hours of conflict. There is much also about a saint's inner life—the soul of a Christian. The soul is the same in every age. It can be self pervaded, or influenced by Satanic power, or God possessed. There is also a remarkable exposition of the closing verses of Romans 8. We get a glimpse into the deep things of life. And we learn much about the principalities and powers that encircle us, but are not to conquer us. There is a lovely parable of the making of bread used to illustrate the making of saints. And a word about the patience of the saints in a whirl of tumult. The four sections have appeared as separate booklets, but in this form they fuse into one great message, making clear the truth that the Lord's servant may be, and should be, "*as his Lord.*"

David Lambert*

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



*Yet it was well, and Thou hast said in season,
"As is the Master shall the servant be:"
Let me not slide into the treason,
Seeking an honour which they gave not Thee.*



*Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.*

F. W. H. Myers*

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* F. W. H. Myers (1843-1901): British poet and educator.



❖

Contents

The Fighting Chance

The Soul of a Christian

Foreword

Soul Satisfaction

God's Searching of a Sincere Soul

The Need to Be a Christian

Characteristics of the Soul

The Temple of God

Arriving at Myself

The Saints in the Disaster of Worldliness

"Out of the Wreck I Rise"

The Conditions of Spiritual Life

The Sacrament of Saints

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Fighting Chance

Romans 8:35-39

The Mental Field

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish . . . ? (rv)

During the French Revolution little boys who could not much more than walk carried a banner around with the words, “Tremble, tyrants, we are growing” printed on it. That is the aspect I want us to look at. We are not meant to be “carried to heaven on flow’ry beds of ease,” we are given the fighting chance, and it is a glorious fight. Jesus Christ came to fit men to fight, He came to make the lame, the halt, the paralysed, the all but sin-damned, into terrors to the prince of this world.

If there is one thing an unsaved man is incapable of doing, it is fighting against the awful powers of sin. He can fight in the physical realm because he has the spirit of lust; but Paul warns that “our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (rv). No man is a match for that warfare unless he is saved by God’s grace. “Wherefore take up the whole armour of God. . . .” Fancy telling a

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

man to put on the armour of God while he has a traitor on the inside! A man has to put on the armour of God to fight in when he has had the lustful disposition taken out of him; for what purpose? That he may fight all that comes against him and come off more than conqueror. Have you ever seen Jesus Christ take a man who has been paralysed by sin, paralysed by a wrong past, by a present that makes him say, "I shall never be different"—have you ever seen Jesus Christ take that man and turn him into a fighter, one who can "turn to flight armies of aliens"? That is what Jesus Christ can do by His marvellous salvation; He can put into the man whose energy has been sapped by sin and wrong until he is all but in hell, a life so strong and full that Satan has to flee whenever he meets him. Is there a man here who would not give his right arm, nay, his very life, if God would fit him to fight, and make him more than conqueror over sin and Satan and circumstances? Thank God, He can do it! Oh, let me repeat it, I do not care how defaced you may be morally, how weak and backslidden, I do know that Jesus Christ can make you more than conqueror as you draw on His Resurrection life.

"The fighting chance" exactly describes the way we are made. Take our bodies: we are kept healthy by our capacity to fight, and the stronger the forces within the better is our health. Health simply means a perfect balance between the body and the outer world. The same is true mentally. I continually come across people with rusty "thinkers," they think about their business but about nothing else, and the forces within have become desperately weak; consequently when tribulation comes their minds

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

are confused, and the result is that errors come into the life. If the forces within are strong and healthy they give us warning and enable us to crush in a vice on the threshold of the mind everything that ought not to come there. God can impart to a man the power to select what his mind thinks, the power to think only what is right and pure and true.

If it is a fight in the physical and mental realm is also a fight in the spiritual realm, only tremendously intensified, because when we receive the new life from God, Satan instantly brings all his power to crush it out. But thank God, no matter how the enemy presses He can make us , more than conquerors because the very life of Jesus is imparted to us and we are able to face the devil and sin as He did.

(a) Predicted

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33; see John 17:14-16)

Jesus Christ foretold tribulation; He conveyed His message with a clarion voice to the saints in all ages—"In the world ye shall have tribulation," and the Apostle Paul continually warns us that we have no right to settle on our lees. "For verily, when we were with you, we told you plainly [mg] that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know" (1 Thessalonians 3:4 rv). Tribulation means

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

being thronged by severe affliction and trouble; that is what the saints are to expect in this dispensation and not be astonished when it comes. God allows tribulation and anguish to come right to the threshold of our lives in order to prove to us that His life in us is more than a match for all that is against us. When we see the awfulness of evil in this world we imagine there is no room for anything but the devil and wrong; but this is not so. God restrains the powers of evil. How does He do it? Through the lives of the saints who are pushing the battle everywhere their feet are placed. The devil tackles on the right hand and on the left but they are more than conquerors, they not only go through the tribulation, but are “exceeding joyful” in it.

(b) Portrayed

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! [rv] how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37; see Romans 9:1-3)

Have you ever noticed the examples the New Testament gives of those who go through tribulation? Our Lord Himself and the Apostle Paul. The writer to the Hebrews says, “Consider him. . . .” Have you ever considered Jesus Christ’s distress over Jerusalem? Do we know anything about that kind of tribulation? There is a difference between the

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

distress that comes to our human minds and the distress of the Holy Ghost through us. Jesus warned that “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” Why? Because people are not rooted in the right place. No matter how iniquity may abound, or how crushing may be the afflictions that throng around, Jesus Christ can make us more than conquerors while at the same time we taste the anguish of the Holy Ghost.

A great danger besets Christians, and Satan is at the back of it, viz., the danger which makes men and women think that they are God’s favourites. No one can monopolise God; it is easy to say that, and yet we seem to think we can. God has no favourites, but when we let Him have His right of way through us He begins to unveil something more of His purposes in our lives. Has God unfolded to you His purpose in your family? in your business? in Battersea?* wherever you are? or is tribulation making you wilt? making you swoon for sympathy? making you stagnate? It is an easy business to want to get away from tribulation, but fighting makes us strong, gloriously strong.

Are you saying—“I wonder if I am ever going to get out of these circumstances? if things are ever going to alter for me?” Let God alter you, let Him put within you the life of His Son, and backed by Almighty God, you will not only get the fighting chance, but you will glory in tribulation[†]—the tramp of the conqueror about you. God grant we may let our hearts talk to our minds, and let our minds

* Battersea. An area of southwest London; location of the League of Prayer headquarters.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



follow on to know; and we can only know by means of this tribulation-experience.

When you have to go and see some “big” person, remember to take a deep breath and you will be surprised to find how courageous you feel. Apply that spiritually, when there is tribulation and distress thronging round you, take time and draw in a tremendous draught of the grace of God, and you will find it is a delight to meet it because He makes us more than conquerors in the midst of it all.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Moral Field

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall . . . persecution? (Romans 8:35)

Morality is not something with which we are gifted, we make morality; it is another word for character. “Except your righteousness” (i.e., your morality) “shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” said Jesus, “ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” (rv). Morality is not only correct conduct on the outside, but correct thinking within where only God can see. No matter how a man may have been tampered with by Satan, God can re-make him so that in every moral battlefield he can come off more than conqueror. Thank God He does give us the fighting chance! In certain moods we are inclined to criticise God for not [having] made the world like a foolproof machine whereby it would be impossible to go wrong. If God had made men and women like that we would have been of no worth to Him. Jesus Christ by His almighty Redemption makes us of the stuff that can stand the strain.

One afternoon I was watching the birds on the lake in Battersea Park and I got a splendid illustration of persecution. There were all kinds of birds—ducks and seagulls and swans, and some birds not native to our shores. Children were feeding them, and one

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

white duck got hold of a crust. Immediately the other ducks tried to grab it from her, but she swam through her own crowd, easily outwitting them. Then the foreign birds swooped down on her, a new style of enemy, but I never saw rabbit or boy chase and turn with such dexterity as that duck, and over and over again the seagulls struck the water instead of the duck. Then along came the cygnets and tried to pull the duck back by main force and take the crust from her, but the more they tackled, the more dextrous she got, until at last she cleared them all and got complete victory. That is exactly the meaning of persecution—systematic vexation.

(a) Place

And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth. (Matthew 13:20-21⁺ rv)

The first place where you meet persecution is after conversion. I am not using the word “conversion” in the sense of regeneration, but of being in the condition to *receive* something from God (see Acts 26:18). As soon as you turn in the direction of God and receive a word from Him, you will find systematic vexation begin on that particular word—“and when tribulation or persecution ariseth

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.”[†] The proof that you have the root of the matter in you is that you easily prevail against persecution. How many of us have turned aside at the very outset, at conversion point, when we first begin to testify, because of persecution? Jesus Christ told us to expect it. I think we are losing sight of the real meaning of testimony; it is not for the sake of others, but for our own sake. It makes us know we have no one to rely on but God.

Persecution is not only met with at the threshold, it increases as we go on in the Christian life. A man may get through persecution from his own crowd, but when it comes to persecution from principalities and powers, that is a domain he knows nothing about. When we are saved and sanctified God does not shield us from any requirement of a son or daughter of His; He lifts His hand off, as it were, and says to the devil “Do your worst”: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4); and we find to our delight that we are made more than conquerors. We talk about people being “loved into blessing,” but no one is loved into blessing unless he is first lured by that love to a tremendous surgical operation. There must be a radical alteration within before the new life is there which will overcome all that comes against it. Persecution is the thing that tests our Christianity, and it always comes in our own setting; the crowd outside never bothers us. To have brickbats and rotten eggs flung at you is not persecution, it simply makes you feel good and does you no harm at all. But when your own crowd cut you dead and

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

systematically vex you, then says Jesus, “count it all joy.” Leap for joy “when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man’s sake”[†]—not for the sake of some crotchety notion of our own.

(b) Profit

Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:11-12[†] rv; see 2 Corinthians 12:10)

Jesus Christ not only warned that persecution would come, He went further and said that it was profitable to go through persecution. “Blessed are ye, when men shall . . . persecute you.”[†] The way the world treats me is the exhibition of my inner disposition. “Whosoever maketh himself a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” The line where the world ends and Christianity begins alters in every generation. What was worldliness in Paul’s day is not worldliness in our day; the line is altering all the time. To-day the world has taken on so many things out of the Church, and the Church has taken on so many things out of the world, that it is difficult to know where you are. Immediately you let the disposition God gives you manifest itself, you are

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



going to be a “speckled bird.”* “Is mine heritage unto me as a speckled bird of prey?” (rv) asked Jeremiah. No matter how sweet and winsome you may be, you will come across something that positively detests you. “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.” Do we know anything about it?

Is some discouraged soul saying—“If only God would give me different circumstances”? No one understands your circumstances but God, and He has given you the fighting chance to prove you can be more than conqueror in all these things. Let God lift you out of the broken place, out of the bedraggled place. Let Him put within you the Holy Spirit so that you can face the music of life and become more than conqueror in every place where you have been defeated. Carlyle* said of Tennyson that he was always carrying about with him a lump of chaos and turning it into cosmos. That is another way of putting this truth, that we make our own character. God gives us a new disposition, the disposition of His Son; then we have to work out what He has worked in, and the way we react in the circumstances God engineers for us produces character.

Have you ever noticed how God permits the natural virtues to break down? People whose lives have been moral and upright get astounded when these virtues begin to crumble. They have been trying to build up a character on these virtues, and it

* speckled bird: a person who stands out as abnormal, odd, or eccentric

* Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881): Scottish-born literary figure in nineteenth-century England, a writer, biographer, essayist, historian, and critic.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



cannot be done. Natural virtues are not a promise of what we are going to be, but a remnant of what we once were. No natural virtue can come anywhere near the standard Jesus Christ demands. We have to receive the Holy Spirit and let Him bring us to the place where we are so identified with the Death of Jesus that it is “no longer I, but Christ that liveth in me” (rv); and then go on to build up a character on the basis of Jesus Christ’s disposition. The Christian life is drawn from first to last, and all in between, from the Resurrection life of the Lord Jesus.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Material Field

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall . . . nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:35)

The Material Field, i.e., things that come to a man's life from the outside—famine, nakedness, peril, sword. The Apostle Paul seems to be never tired of comparing the Christian life to a fight, and a fight against tremendous odds, but always a winning fight. In these verses Paul brings before our contemplation every conceivable battlefield; every manoeuvre and strategy of the enemy is embraced, no phase of his tactics is left out, and in it all he says we are “more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” We cannot be *more than* conquerors if there is nothing to fight! Our Lord Himself and the Spirit of God in the Epistles make it very clear that everything that is not of God will try its best to kill His life out of us; yet instead of doing that it makes us all the stronger. The love of God in Christ Jesus is such that He can take the most unfit man—unfit to survive, unfit to fight, unfit to face moral issues—and make him not only fit to survive and to fight, but fit to face the biggest moral issues and the strongest power of Satan, and come off more than conqueror. The love in God in Christ Jesus through the mighty Atonement is such that it can do this for the feeblest, the most sinful man, if he will hand himself over to God.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

(a) *The Book of Martyrs*



Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. (John 21:18; cf. Luke 10:19); John 16:2

A martyr is one who is put to death for adherence to principles. Martyrdom is not peculiar to the Christian religion. Men and women who suffer death for adhering to principles are found not only in the Christian religion, but in every religion under heaven, and outside any religion; but the particular type of martyrdom we are referring to is that of those men and women who go to death because of obedience to the principles of the life of Jesus in them.

In 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul mentions a strange training for the apostles. He says that “God hath set forth us, the apostles, last of all” (i.e., as the last item in the day’s play in the theatre) “as men doomed to death, for we are made a spectacle unto the world . . .” (rv); and the writer to the Hebrews, reminding us of the witnesses of old, says the same thing: they were “destitute, afflicted, ill treated” (11:36-37 rv). We are apt to say that we are not called to

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



martyrdom to-day, but I think we shall begin to find that we are, and to a crueller martyrdom than that of the early days, which was intense and fierce and then over.

“. . . or nakedness?” Nakedness means to be destitute of clothing and shelter, destitute of all sustenance for life. God said to Satan concerning Job—“Behold, all that he hath is in thy hand [rv mg].” That permission has never been withdrawn, and every now and again Satan gets permission from God to play havoc with all our material possessions. “For a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” If our life is in our material possessions, and nakedness, peril and sword tackle and destroy them, where is our faith? But if we bank on the love of God in Jesus Christ He will make us more than conqueror “in all these things.” God grant we may put God first. When Mary of Bethany broke the alabaster box of ointment^{†††} on the feet of Jesus, the disciples were indignant and said, “To what purpose is this waste, for this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.”^{††} Have you ever noticed how strangely Jesus answered them? “For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good; but Me ye have not always.”^{††} Did Jesus mean that He had no care for the poor? That He did not understand what an awful, stinging, grinding thing it is to be poverty-stricken and destitute? No one on earth felt these things more keenly than Jesus did, but He was pointing out that, as His disciples, the great note for our lives is not sympathy with the poor, not an

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



understanding of the needs of men, but an understanding of His point of view.

(b) The Boycott of Mediocrity

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. (Luke 6:22^t rv; cf. 1 Peter 4:4)

“All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (rv), says Paul, and our Lord says the same thing. Men will make you destitute of their society, they will cut you dead, and when they do speak of you, they will speak evil. No man knew this better than the Apostle Paul, and what did he do? He despised being despised! Persecution is systematic vexation, it does not leave you alone, it is something that throngs you; but to be boycotted means to be left alone, destitute of the comrades you used to have—“they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.” But they don’t know that you carry a wonderful kingdom within, a kingdom full of light and peace and joy no matter how destitute and alone you may be on the outside. That is the wonderful work of the Lord in a man’s soul. “Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy.”[†]

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

One of the things I remember during the Welsh Revival* was the unspeakable presence of God. It was unlike anything I had ever felt before. You could *feel* the presence of God in the very atmosphere, and tell the districts where it was and where it was not, and I remember coming to the conclusion that if a martyr felt the marvel of that Presence he would not feel the pain. Another thing that struck me was that while many were getting right with God, others were content with the enthusiasm of the presence of God and bringing forth no “fruits meet for repentance.”† When shall we understand that God’s method is repentance first and then the reviving life of God? If revival does not bring forth fruits meet for repentance it will end in riot and ultimately in ruin.

(c) The Big Meaning

*Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
(Romans 8:36 rv)*

Anaesthesia means insensibility to pain, and there is such a thing as spiritual anaesthesia—God put you to sleep while the thing hurts. Some Christians do not seem to know that they are going through things, they are so wonderfully upheld by the life and power of God within, and when you begin to sympathise with them, they look at you in amazement—“Why, what have I been through?”

* Welsh Revival (1904-1905): sweeping evangelism and spiritual renewal that began in Wales and affected churches throughout Britain.



They had never realised that the battle was on. The danger is to get taken up with external tribulations and trials and when we come to the end of the day to say, “Thank God, I have just got through!” Where is “the unsearchable riches of Christ” about that? The grace of God will make us marvellously impervious to all the onslaughts of tribulation and persecution and destitution because we are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and cannot be awakened up to self-pity. God sends His rough weather and His smooth weather, but we pay no attention to either because we are taken up only with the one central thing—the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Where are you placed in your circumstances? Is it tribulation and anguish that are perplexing you? Is it nervous trouble that is overcoming you, the nameless dread that comes from nerves that are all on fire and jangled? I firmly believe there is no type of mental or nervous disease over which Jesus Christ cannot make us more than conqueror as we draw on His Resurrection life. Is your battlefield the moral one? Persecution, systematic vexation, in your home because you have got right with God? Persistent ridicule from those you work with because of your obedience to Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ can make you more than conqueror there. Remember, morality is produced by fight, not by dreaming, not by shutting our eyes to facts, but by being made right with God; then we can make our morality exactly after the stamp of Jesus Christ.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The Natural Maneuvers

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Paul has catalogued the things over which we are more than conquerors—tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword; now he seems to strike another note, a note of defiance—“for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

He conjures; he marshals before him; he names over in all their greatest horror every conceivable trouble which afflicts the soul of man; he calls them up and he passes them in review before him, and he bids them do their worst, and sets them all at defiance.

. . . Life is an infinitely worse thing than death, more terrible, more appalling.

Dr. David Smith*

* David Smith (1866-1937): Scottish-born Presbyterian minister, teacher, and author.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

(a) *The Great Dread—Death*

Death is a great dread. It is easy to say that God is love until death has snatched away your dearest friend, then I defy you to say that God is love unless God's grace has done a work in your soul. Death means extinction of life as we understand it; our dead are gone and have left an aching void behind them. They do not talk to us, we do not feel their touch, and when the bereaved heart cries out, nothing comes back but the hollow echo of its own cry. The heart is raw, no pious chatter, no scientific cant can touch it. It is the physical calamity of death *plus* the thing behind which no man can grasp, that makes death so terrible. We have so taken for granted the comfort that Jesus Christ brings in the hour of death that we forget the awful condition of men apart from that revelation. Do strip your mind and imagination of the idea that we have comfort about the departed apart from the Bible; we have not. Every attempt to comfort a bereaved soul apart from the revelation Jesus Christ brings is a vain speculation. We know nothing about the mystery of death apart from what Jesus Christ tells us; but blessed be the Name of God, what He tells us makes us more than conquerors, so that we can shout the victory through the darkest valley of the shadow[†] that ever a human being can go through.

The Bible reveals that death is inevitable—"and so death passed upon all men" (Romans 5:12[†]). "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). Repeat that over to yourself. It is appointed to every one of us that we are going to cease to be as we are now, and the place that knows us now shall know

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



us no more. We may shirk it, we may ignore it, we may be so full of robust health and spirits that the thought of death never enters, but it is inevitable.

Another thing—the Bible says that a certain class of man is totally indifferent to death, “for there are no pangs in their death” (Psalm 73:4 rv). Over and over again the Bible points out that the wicked man, the Esau-type of man who is perfectly satisfied with life as it is, has not the slightest concern about death—because he is so brave and strong? No, because he is incapable of realising what death means. The powers that press from the natural world have one tendency, and one only, to deaden all communication with God.

One other thing—the Bible says there are those who are intimidated by death, “. . . that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15 rv). The thought of death is never away from them; it terrorises their days, it alarms their nights. Now read very reverently Hebrews 5:7: “Who . . . having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death . . .” Who is that? The Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot begin to fathom this passage; after years of meditation on it we come only to the threshold of realising what Gethsemane^{†††} represents. Jesus Christ can deliver from the dread of death—“that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Death has no terror for the man who is rightly related to God

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

through Jesus Christ. “How blest the righteous when he dies!” Were there any terrors in the passing of the Founder of the League of Prayer?* It was a marvellous and glorious translation. “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”†—absolutely nullified, destroyed by the majestic might of the Atonement.

(b) The Greatest Danger—Life

Life is a far greater danger than death. I want to say something, crudely, but very definitely: the Bible nowhere says that men are damned; the Bible says that men are damnable. There is always the possibility of damnation in any life, always the possibility of disobedience; but, thank God, there is also always the possibility of being made “more than conqueror.” The possibilities of life are awful. Think—are you absolutely certain that you are not going to topple headlong over a moral precipice before you are three years older? Look back on your life and ask yourself how it was you escaped when you were set on the wrong course—the tiniest turn and you would have been a moral ruin? Disease cut off with a tremendous fell swoop your companions—why did it not cut you off? The men with you in your youth who were so brilliant—where are they now? Out in the gutter some of them, all but damned while they live. Why are you not there? Why am I not there? Oh, it does us good,

* Founder of the League of Prayer: Reader Harris (1847-1909). Prominent British barrister, founded the Pentecostal League of Prayer in 1891; friend and mentor of Oswald Chambers.

although it frightens us, to look at the possibilities of life. May God help us to face the issues.

Unless a man's peace and prosperity are based on a right relationship to God, it may end in a sudden and terrible awakening. We never know whether the next moment is going to bring us face to face with green pastures or a hurricane. The Bible reveals that here is a ruling principle at work in this world that hates God, and when we take sides against that principle there is the very devil to face. That is the Apostle Paul's argument here. When we are born again into the heavenly kingdom, then come tribulation and anguish, then come persecution and famine, then come nakedness, peril and sword; then comes life, and then comes death—mocking us with paradoxes and puzzles we cannot explain. The possibilities and perils of life are enormous. It is only when some such considerations get hold of men who are bound up in "a show of things" that they begin to see the need for Jesus Christ's Redemption.

(c) The Greater Deliverance

I have been drawing a very dark picture, you say. I have not. It is not within the power of human tongue or archangel's tongue to state what an awful fact death is, and what a still more awful fact life is. But thank God, there is the greatest deliverance conceivable from all that life may bring and from all that death may bring. Jesus Christ has destroyed the dominion of death, and He can make us fit to face every problem of life, more than conqueror all along the line.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Let God have His way, and He will turn the drama of your life into a doxology, and you will understand why the Psalmist breaks out with the words, "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" Jesus Christ can make the weakest man into a Divine dreadnought, fearing nothing. He can plant within him the life that was in Himself, the life Time cannot touch. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth . . . hath everlasting life," that is, the life Jesus had, so that a man can face all the powers of hell with a conqueror's tread. Heroics? No, heroism. Heroics sound all very well on a stage, or on paper, but heroism works in flesh and blood, and Jesus Christ makes us flesh-and-blood dreadnoughts. Not all the power of the enemy can fuss or turn aside the soul that is related to God through the Atonement.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Supernatural maneuvers

*For I am persuaded, that neither . . .
angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . .
. shall be able to separate us from the
love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our
Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)*

By the help of God's Spirit I want, for one moment, to lift the veil from the unseen world as the Bible reveals it that we may understand what a marvellous salvation we have; a salvation that keeps us not only from dangers we see and know, not only from sin and all we understand as the works of the devil, but a salvation that keeps us from dangers we know nothing about. Oh, there are tremendous possibilities around us! The Bible reveals that the unseen world has rulers and majesties and tremendous beings with whom man can get into communication and be possessed by, but God pronounces His curse on the man or woman who dares to communicate with them.

(a) Messengers of the Unseen Universe

"Neither . . . angels . . ."The Bible has a great deal to say about angels: there are *Angelic Hosts* (see Matthew 26:53; Hebrews 1:7, 14) and *Angelic Helpers* (see Psalm 91:11-12; Matthew 18:10). When we were taught as children that angels watch

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



around our beds it was not a fairy story we were told, but a revelation fact. The angels are there to guard us, and they watch and guard every blood-bought soul. And there is an *Angelic Hell*; there is no other place for fallen angels (Matthew 25:41; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10). It is never stated that God has provided a place for men who will not come to Him; it is implied with solemn warning that the only place they can go to is that “prepared for the devil and his angels.”

The good angels are a host and the bad angels are a host. To-day spiritualism is having tremendous vogue; men and women are getting into communication with departed spirits and putting themselves in league with the unseen powers. If you have got as far as reading fortunes in tea-cups, *stop*. If you have gone as far as telling fortunes by cards, *stop*. I will tell you why—the devil uses these apparently harmless things to create a fearful curiosity in the minds of men and women, especially young men and women, and it may bring them into league with the angelic forces that hate God, into league with the principalities and the rulers of this world’s darkness. Never say, “What is the harm in it?” Push it to its logical conclusion and ask—“Where will this end?” You are absolutely safe as long as you remain under the shelter of the Atonement; but if you do not—I don’t care what your experiences are—you are absolutely unsafe. At any minute dangers may beset you, terrors and darkness may take hold of you and rack your life with terrific perils.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

God grant we may keep as far away from these things as we can. But if in the strange providence of God you find you are near a spiritualist meeting, pray, and keep on your praying, and you will paralyse every power of the medium if he is genuine. No spiritualistic seance can continue if there is a Christian anywhere near who knows how to lay hold of God in prayer; no spirits will communicate. I could tell you wonderful stories of how God's power has worked. Blessed be God; Jesus Christ's salvation makes us more than conqueror over the angelic forces.

(b) Majesties of the Unseen Universe

“nor principalities . . .”A principality is the jurisdiction of a prince. According to the Bible, the kingdoms of this world are under the rule of the prince of this world, viz., Satan (cf. Matthew 4:8-9). A time is coming when they will be taken from him,— “the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ” (rv), but at present they are in his power.

Men say—“I can't help committing sin”; “I can't help doing this thing.” Are they right? Perfectly right. You may talk to further orders* about a weak will; there is nothing more absurd. It is not the man's weak will; he has got into league with a power stronger than he is, and when once a man gets in league with the prince of this world, I defy all his strength of will to stand before the terrific power of this world's darkness for one second. According to

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

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



the New Testament, there is such a thing as obsession by unclean, malicious, wicked spirits who will damn and ruin body and soul in hell (cf. Luke 11:21-26). A moral empty heart is the resort of these spirits when a man is off his guard. But if a man has been born again of the Spirit of God and is keeping in the light, he cannot help going right because he is backed by the tremendous power of Almighty God. What does the Apostle John say?— “the evil one toucheth him not” (rv). What a marvellous certainty! God grant we may be so filled with the Holy Spirit that we listen to His checks along every line. No power can deceive a child of God who keeps in the light with God. I am perfectly certain that the devil likes to deceive us and limit us in our practical belief as to what Jesus Christ can do. There is no limit to what He can do, absolutely none. “All things are possible to him that believeth .” Jesus says that faith in Him is omnipotent. God grant we may get hold of this truth.

(c) Miracles of the Unseen Universe

“nor powers . . .”The word is the same as that translated “miracles.” A miracle is a work done by one who has fuller knowledge and authority than we have. Things that were called miracles a hundred years ago are not thought of as miracles to-day because men have come to a fuller knowledge. The miracles of Jesus were an exhibition of the power of God, that is, they were simply mirrors of what God Almighty is doing gradually and everywhere and all the time; but every miracle Jesus performed had a tremendous lesson behind it. It was not merely an exhibition of the power of God, there was always a

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES





❖

moral meaning behind for the individual. That is why God does not heal some people. We are apt to confine life to one phase only, the physical: there are three phases—physical, psychical and spiritual. Whenever Jesus touched the physical domain a miracle happened in the other phases as well. If a miracle is wrought by any other power in the physical it leaves no corresponding stamp of truth in the other domains of soul and spirit. In this dispensation it is not a question of whether God will sovereignly permit us to be delivered from sin, it is His expressed will that we should be delivered from sin; but when it comes to healing it is not a question of God's will, but of His sovereignty, that is, whether the pre-dispensational efficacy of the Atonement is active on our behalf just now. There is no case of healing in the Bible that did not come from a direct intervention of the sovereign touch of God. We make the mistake of putting an abstract truth deduced from the Word of God in the place of God Himself. When God does not heal it is time we got down to close quarters with God and asked Him why. There is a deep lesson behind; we cannot lay down a general law for everyone, we can only find out the reason by going to God.

Our Lord revealed that the public power of Satan would be greater in the days in which we live than ever before. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24 rv), and the Apostle Paul foretold that there would be "signs and lying wonders . . . according to the working of Satan" (2 Thessalonians 2:9 rv), but we have no need to fear

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

if we are experiencing the salvation of the Lord Jesus. He will banish all the tremendous powers and majesties that have been set against Him: “having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers [rv mg], He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” According to the Bible, the One who laughs last is God. “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh” (Psalm 2:4). The Apostle Paul has embraced every possible phase of the enemy’s tactics, and he says we are more than conquerors in them all through Him that loved us.

The Frontier Battle Lines

For I am persuaded, that neither . . . things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation [rv mg], shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

In these verses Paul does not mention the ordinary trials of life; he mentions the imperilling experiences which thousands have gone through these past years, distress and anguish which hold the eyes too much awake to sleep, tribulation that tears and lacerates everything; but, he says, the love of God is untouched by these experiences. That love renders impotent the strength of our most formidable enemy. Any of the elemental ministries, life, death, things present, things to come, may kill the castles built by human love; may remove and

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

shatter them like an incoming tide, their strength is overwhelming, but they are powerless to touch the love of God in Christ Jesus. When one reads the Apostle Paul, language seems completely beggared in the attempt to express his devotion to Jesus Christ. Faith itself, with Paul, seems to be lost sight of and merged altogether in his personal intimacy with Jesus Christ; his is the very faith of the Son of God, which is not conscious of itself. Remember, this is not meant only for the Apostle Paul, it is for everyone of us. God grant that the Holy Spirit may so kindle all our natural powers, so invade us with the power of God, that we may begin to “comprehend . . . what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of the love of Christ for our souls.

(a) The Infinitely Great

“nor height . . .” For generations the telescope has been made the means of terrifying us instead of bringing God nearer to us. Those who deal with the great secrets of the universe imply that our planet is such a tiny spot in the tremendous universe that it is a piece of stupid conceit on our part to think that God watches over us. And to make our planet the centre where God performed the marvellous drama of His own history of the Incarnation and Atonement is absurd, they say. But watch a simple-minded person, one who is right with God and is not terrified by the reasonings of men, as he looks at the stars and exclaims, “when I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou are mindful of him?” It is said not in despair, but in

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

adoring wonder. Then watch the man who is not right with God. The sight of the infinitely great to him pushes God right out of it, until God becomes a great first Cause, a remote cold principle. The far-flung battle lines reach beyond the stars to the very throne of God, and deeper down than the deepest depths of hell; they may test and storm, they may spread seas and space, but, says Paul, "I am persuaded that they are not able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(b) The Infinitely Little

"nor depth . . ." Look at the world either through a telescope or a microscope and you will be dwarfed into terror by the infinitely great or the infinitely little. Naturalists tell us that there are no two blades of grass alike, and close inspection of a bee's wing under a microscope reveals how marvellously it is made. What do I read in the Bible? I read that the God of heaven counts the hairs of our heads[†]. Jesus says so. I read that the mighty God watches the sparrows so intimately that not one of them falls on the ground without His notice.[†] I read that the God who holds the seas in the hollow of His hand and guides the stars in their courses, clothes the grass of the field.[†] Through the love of God in Christ Jesus we are brought into a wonderful intimacy with the infinitely great and the infinitely little.

(c) The Infinitely Possible

"nor any other creation . . ." The Apostle Paul knew better than most of us that there are

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



principalities and powers and ordinances behind the seen universe that may at any moment flash forth as an uncanny spiritual “airship,” or burst up from the deep as a terrific supernatural “submarine,” terrifying us out of our wits. But, he says, no matter what the different creations may be, “I am persuaded that neither . . . height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Paul is not boasting, he is speaking from his own absolute certainty that the Cross of Christ has in it the very secret heart of God. We belittle and misrepresent the love of God when we see it merely on the surface. It is easy to think imperially, easy to think big thoughts and dream big dreams. But Jesus Christ is not big thoughts and big dreams. He is a tremendously big Saviour for little insignificant creatures such as we are. Through the Atonement God Almighty can place you, my poor, weak, timid, sin-tossed brother or sister, where nothing can touch you or harm you. No wonder the Apostle Paul goes down to the lowest depths and climbs to the highest heights, and shouts in triumph—“we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”!

If this great God is ours, what about our bodies, can He keep them in trim? What about our minds, can He keep our imaginations stayed upon Him so that we are able to say without hysterics—“Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea”? Every now and again an attack from the unseen realm may surprise us and take us off our guard, but if we are right with God, what do we find? We find God on guard, and

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



we are amazed and stand back and say, “Why, this is wonderful!”— “Kept by the power of God.”

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” At the end of all trials, and when there is no more trial, the love of God is not finished; it still goes on. “. . . having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” This is the great theme that keeps the soul of the saint undaunted in courage. It does not matter where a man may get to in the way of tribulation or anguish, none of it can wedge in between and separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Let me close with a simple illustration. Children are sometimes afraid in the dark, fear gets into their hearts and nerves and they get into a tremendous state; then they hear the voice of mother or father, and all is quietened and they go off to sleep. In our own spiritual experience it is the same; some terror comes down the road to meet us and our hearts are seized with a tremendous fear; then we hear our own name called, and the voice of Jesus saying, “It is I, be not afraid,”^{††} and the peace of God which passeth understanding takes possession of our hearts.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Soul of a Christian

Foreword (1936)

There is perennial value in these Talks because they deal with abiding things. The soul of man retains its constituent elements and has to face the same sort of problems. Man needs God, and when he would fain find Him, or be found of Him it is well to know progress may be hindered by blocked roads, by blindness or fear, or unbelief or basic enmity against God. Oswald Chambers had well explored that way to God, and God's way to man, and these Talks are the fruit of that knowledge and experience gained by exploring his own heart and in dealing with his fellows. He says, "All this vast complex of 'me,' which we cannot begin to understand, God knows completely." Every man is "lost" who is content i[n] his native estrangement from his God, till the Holy Spirit is allowed to adjust the repentant and believing heart to God through Christ's Redemption. The second Talk is a mighty discourse on "God's scrutiny of man," as the first might be called "How to become a hilarious saint." These Talks come to grips with us, and some things heard from the speaker's lips years ago have lost none of their power to lay hold on heart and mind and will. They will help men who are in earnest, as Jacob Behmen* put it, to become rightly related to

* Jacob Behmen, also Jakob Bohme (1575-1624): German mystic.



eternal righteousness, and God's own wholeness (holiness). It will pay anyone to soak in the message of this book till, by the working of God's Spirit and the surgery of events, he comes to himself, and comes right home to God.

D. L. (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.

❖

Soul Satisfaction

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Psalm 139:1

None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be let alone for ever). Psalm 49:7-8 (rv)

Beware of believing that the human soul is simple, for it is not true. Read Psalm 139, and look into yourself, and you will soon find you are much too complex to touch. Charles Wagner* was the apostle of naturalness, “the gospel of temperament”—Be simple! How can anyone who is wide-awake be simple? We befool ourselves into moral imbecility if we believe those who tell us the human soul is simple. As long as we think we understand ourselves we are in a lamentable state of ignorance. The first dose of conviction of sin, or of the realisation of what the Psalmist states, viz., the unfathomable depths of our own souls, will put an end to that ignorance. The only One who can redeem the human soul is the Lord Jesus Christ and He has done it, and the Holy Spirit brings the realisation of this to us experimentally. All this vast complex “me” which we cannot begin to

* Charles Wagner (1852-1918): Protestant clergyman and writer in Paris; author of *The Simple Life*, published in 1904.



understand, God knows completely, and through the Atonement He invades every part of our personality with His life.

Soul is the responsible expression of the ruling personal spirit, and when the personal spirit is filled with God's Spirit, we have to see that we obey His Spirit and reconstruct another soul. God's Spirit entering my spirit does not become my spirit, but quickens my spirit, and I begin to express a new soul. It is not the nature of the working of the soul that is altered, that remains the same in a regenerate human spirit as in an unregenerate human spirit, but a different driving power expresses itself. When God's Spirit comes into my personal spirit, instantly I am introduced to a life which manifests itself in contradiction to my old way of reasoning and expressing myself, and the consequence is that the life whereby I have affinity with other people is upset and they wonder what is the matter with me, a disturbing element has come in which cannot be estimated. The incoming of the Spirit of God disturbs the reasoning faculties, and for a while the soul that is born from above (rv mg) is inarticulate, it has no expression; the equilibrium has been upset by the incoming of a totally new spirit into my spirit, and Jesus Christ says, "In your patience ye shall win your souls" (Luke 21:19 rv)—acquire your new soul with patience .

Satisfaction and the demand for satisfaction is a God-given principle in human nature, but it must be satisfaction in the highest. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Naturally

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

We preach to men as if they were conscious they were dying sinners, they are not; they are having a good time, and our talk about being born from above (rv mg) is in a domain they know nothing of. We do not need the Holy Spirit to reveal that immorality is wrong, but we do need the Holy Spirit to reveal that the complacency of the natural life has Satan at its basis. Nowadays we have come to the conclusion that a man must be a down-and-out sinner before he needs Jesus Christ to do anything for him; consequently we debase Jesus Christ's salvation to mean merely that He can save the vile and sensual man and lift him into a better life. We quote our Lord's statement that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (rv) and misinterpret His meaning by limiting "the lost" to those who are lost in our eyes.

The natural man does not want to be born again. If a man's morality is well within his own grasp and he has enough religion to give the right tone to his

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

natural life, to talk about being born again seems utterly needless. The natural man is not in distress, he is not conscious of conviction of sin, or of any disharmony, he is quite contented and at peace. Conviction of sin is the realisation that my natural life is based on a disposition that will not have Jesus Christ. The Gospel does not present what the natural man wants but what he needs, and the Gospel awakens an intense resentment as well as an intense craving. We will take God's blessings and loving-kindnesses and prosperities, but when it comes to the need of having our disposition altered, there is opposition at once. When we come down to close quarters and God's Spirit tells us we must give up the right to ourselves to Jesus Christ and let Him rule, then we understand what Paul meant when he said that "the carnal mind," which resides in the heart, is "enmity against God."

No man can have his state of mind altered without suffering for it in his body, and that is why men do anything to avoid conviction of sin. When a worldly man who is happy, moral and upright, comes in contact with Jesus Christ, his "beauty," i.e., the perfectly ordered completeness of his nature, is destroyed and that man must be persuaded that Jesus Christ has a better kind of life for him otherwise he feels he had better not have come across Him. If I knew nothing about sin before the Holy Spirit came, then why did He come? If I am peaceful and happy and contented and living my life with my morality well within my own grasp, why does the Holy Spirit need to come in and upset the balance and make me miserable and unfit for anything? It is time we asked ourselves these

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



questions. God's Book gives us the answer. Thank God, we are coming to the end of the shallow presentation of Christianity that makes out that Jesus Christ came only to give us peace. Thousands of people are happy without God in this world, but that kind of happiness and peace is on a wrong level. Jesus Christ came to send a sword through every peace that is not based on a personal relationship to Himself. He came to put us right with God that His own peace might reign.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Satanically

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Paul did not say “the lost” were the drunkards and social pariahs, but those “in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not”—they see nothing whatever in all that Jesus Christ stands for.

If the natural remains united with itself long enough it will lead to a deadly Satanic satisfaction, a blind happiness. The words “diabolical” and “Satanic” do not mean the same. Judas became diabolical: “the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him” (John 13:2⁺ rv); Peter became “Satanic”: “But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan” (Matthew 16:23⁺). The Bible holds man responsible for the introduction of Satan. Satan is the representative of the devil, and the devil is the adversary of God in the rule of man. When our Lord came face to face with Satan He dealt with him as representing the attitude man takes up in organising

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



his life apart from any consideration of God. For a thing to be Satanic does not mean that it is abominable and immoral; the Satanically-managed man is absolutely self-governed and has no need of God.

When Satan rules the hearts of natural men under the inspiration of the devil, they are not troubled, they are at peace, entrenched in clean worldliness (cf. Psalm 73), and before God can rule a man's kingdom He must first overthrow this false rule. In the parable in Luke 11:21 our Lord says that "when the strong man fully armed" (Satan) "guardeth his own court, his goods" (i.e., the souls of men) "are in peace" (rv); there is no breaking out into sin and wrongdoing. The one thing the prince of this world will guard against is the incoming of Jesus Christ, the "stronger than he," because "he taketh from him his whole armour wherein he trusted" (rv), The coming of Jesus Christ is not a peaceful thing, it is a disturbing, an overwhelming thing. Am I willing to be born into the realm Jesus Christ is in? If so, I must be prepared for chaos straight off in the realm I am in. The rule which has come in between God and man has to be eclipsed, and Jesus Christ's entering in means absolute chaos concerning the way I have been looking at things, a turning of everything upside down. "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). The old order and the old peace must go, and we cannot get back peace on the old level. Immediately Jesus Christ comes in that peace is gone, and instead there is the sword of conviction. A man does not need the Holy Spirit to tell him that external sins are wrong,

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



ordinary culture and education will do that; but it does take the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin as our Lord defined it. The Holy Spirit is unmistakable in His working, and our Lord said that, “He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, . . . *because they believe not on Me*” (John 16:8-9 rv). That is the very essence of sin. If once we have allowed Jesus Christ to upset the equilibrium, holiness is the inevitable result, or no peace for ever.

One of the most cunning travesties of Satan is to say that he is the instigator of drunkenness and external sins. Man himself is responsible for doing wrong things, and he does wrong things because of the wrong disposition that is in him. The true blame for sin lies in the wrong disposition, and the cunning of our nature makes us blame Satan when we should blame ourselves. When men go into external sins Satan is probably as much upset as the Holy Ghost, but for a different reason. Satan knows perfectly well that when men go into external sin and upset their lives, they will want another Ruler, a Saviour, a Deliverer; but as long as he can keep them in peace and unity and harmony apart from God he will do so. The Bible reveals that there is a solidarity of sin, a bond of union, that keeps men together known as “the body of sin”; it is the mutual inheritance of the human race (see Romans 5:12). The Bible also reveals that Satan is anxious to keep that solidarity intact, because whenever men break out into immoral conduct, it disintegrates his kingdom. The one other force that disintegrates the solidarity of sin is the Spirit of God. Never have the idea that a worldling is unhappy, a worldling is perfectly happy, as thoroughly happy as a Christian.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The persons who are unhappy are the worldlings or the Christians if they are not at one with the principle that binds them. When a worldling is not a worldling at heart, he is miserable; and when a Christian is not a Christian at heart, he is miserable, he carries his religion like a headache instead of something that is worth having. Remember then, the two things that disintegrate Satan's kingdom—breaking out into acts of sin, and conviction by the Spirit of God. This is the solution of a number of moral problems.

The beginning of calamities from the natural standpoint is when our Lord comes across people. The thing that upsets our natural complacency is a touch from our Lord. It may come in a personal interview (as in John 4), but when it comes it is all up instantly with the old order, we can never get it back. Before the Spirit of God can bring peace of mind He has to clear out the rubbish, and before He can do that He has to give us an idea of what rubbish there is.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Spiritually

But God . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:5-6)

If all Jesus Christ came to do was to upset me, make me unfit for my work, upset my friendships and my life, produce disturbance and misery and distress, then I wish He had never come. But that is not all He came to do. He came to lift us up to “the heavenly places”[†] where He is Himself. The whole claim of the Redemption of Jesus is that He can satisfy the last aching abyss of the human soul, not hereafter only, but here and now. Satisfaction does not mean stagnation, it means the knowledge that we have the right type of life for our souls. The hymn has it rightly, “Oh, the peace my Saviour gives!” That peace is the deepest thing a human personality can know, it is almighty. The Apostle Paul emphasises the hilarity of life—“Be not drunk with wine, . . . but be filled with the Spirit.” Enthusiasm is the idea, intoxicated with the life of God. The healthy pagan and the healthy saint are the ones described in God’s Book as hilarious; all in between are diseased and more or less sick. We have no business to be sick unless it is just a preparatory stage towards

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



something better, when God is nursing us through some spiritual illness; but if it is the main characteristic of the life there is something wrong.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the moral frontier where Jesus Christ works; then He says, If you ask God, He will give you the Holy Spirit. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit is the One who regenerates us into the kingdom to which Jesus Christ belongs. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” The touch that comes is as mysterious as the wind. The miracle of the creation of Redemption in our soul is that we suddenly feel an insatiable desire for salvation. Our Lord said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him,” and that is the way He draws him. Redemption is the great Reality that is continually creating within us a longing for God.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

God's Searching of a Sincere Soul

Intercessory Introspection

*Search me, O God, and know my heart:
try me, and know my thoughts. . . .
(Psalm 139:23-24)*

It is far more rare to find a sincere soul than one might suppose. No one but a fool or a sincere soul would ever pray this prayer—"Search me, O God," search me right out to the remotest depths, to the innermost recesses of my thoughts and imaginations; scrutinise me through and through until I know that Thou dost know me utterly, that I may be saved from my own ways and brought into Thy way. Any soul who prays that prayer will be answered.

Psalm 139 states for us the profoundest experience of a soul's life with God. It is a marvellous moment in a man's life when he knows he is explored by God. The introspective tendency in us which makes us want to examine ourselves and know the springs of our thoughts and motives takes the form of prayer with the Psalmist. He speaks of God as the Creator of the vast universe outside him, of His omnipotence and omnipresence, but he does not end there. There is

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

something infinitely more mysterious to the Psalmist than the universe outside him, and that is the mystery of his own soul. “There are mountain-peaks in my soul I cannot climb, ocean depths I cannot fathom; there are possibilities within which terrify me, therefore, O God, search me.” That is introspective intercession.

We must live scrutinised by God, and if you want to know what the scrutiny of God is like, listen to Jesus Christ: “for from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed . . . ,”[†] and then follows a rugged catalogue of things few of us know anything about in conscious life, consequently we are apt to be indignant and resent Jesus Christ’s diagnosis—“I have never felt like a murderer, or an adulterer, therefore those things cannot be in me.” To talk in that way is proof that we are grossly ignorant of ourselves. If we prefer to trust our ignorant innocence we pass a verdict on the only Master of the human heart there is, we tell Him He does not know what He is talking about. The one right thing to do is to listen to Jesus Christ and then hand our hearts over to God to be searched and guarded, and filled with the Holy Spirit, then the wonderful thing is that we never need know and never shall know in actual experience the truth of Jesus Christ’s revelation about the human heart. But if we stand on our own rights and wisdom at any second an eruption may occur in our personal life and we shall discover to our unutterable horror that what Jesus said is appallingly true.

We have no business to be ignorant about ourselves. If any of us have come to manhood or

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

womanhood with the idea that we have a holy innocence on the inside, we are desperately deluded. There is no human being on earth with an innocence which is not based on ignorance, and if we have come to the stage of life we are now in with the belief that innocence and purity are the same thing, it is because we have paid no attention to what Jesus Christ said. Purity is something that has been tested and tried, and triumphed; innocence has always to be shielded. When the Holy Spirit comes in He brings into the centre of our personal life the very Spirit that was manifested in the life of the Lord Jesus, viz., *Holy Spirit*. Jesus Christ has undertaken through His Redemption to put into us a heart so pure that God Almighty can see nothing to censure in it, and the Holy Spirit searches us not only to make us know the possibilities of iniquity in our heart, but to make us “unblameable in holiness” in His sight.^{†††}

The great cry to-day is, “Fulfil yourself, work out what is in you.” If you do, you will work out your own condemnation. But if you let God deal with what is wrong, let Him “presence you with Divinity,” you will be able to work out what He works in, which is a totally different thing. The cry to realise ourselves is the cry to keep God out. If we do not know the tremendous depths of possible iniquity in our hearts, it is because we have never been scrutinised by the Holy Ghost; but let Him turn His searchlight right down to the inmost recesses, and the best of us are shuddering on our faces before God. When the Holy Ghost does scrutinise us (and He will not do it if we do not want Him to, this is the day of our option; a time is coming when He will do

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



it whether we want Him to or not, when we will be only too glad to creep anywhere out of the sight of God whose eyes search as a flame of fire), He reveals not only a depth of possible iniquity that makes us shudder, but a height of holiness of which we never dreamed. The great mystic work of the Holy Spirit is in the dim regions of our personality where we cannot go: "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). "But no man can get there!" Then was the Apostle Paul mad when he said we could be presented "holy and without blemish [rv] and unreprouvable in His sight"? No, the Apostle Paul had been to the Cross of Christ and had learned there a secret which made him say—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," because it is by means of His Cross that Jesus Christ can present us faultless before the throne of God. "Do you mean to say that God can bring the winnowing fan of His Spirit and search out my thoughts and imaginations and find nothing deserving of blame?" That is the meaning of the Atonement as far as our practical experience is concerned; no soul gets there saving by the sovereign grace of God. If we have not caught the meaning of the tremendous moral aspect of the Atonement it is because we have never prayed this prayer, "Search me, O God." Are we sincere enough to ask God to search us, and sincere enough to abide by what His searching reveals?

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Impeccable Integrity

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, . . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

If that means cleansing from all sin in conscious experience only, may God have mercy on us. A man who has been made obtuse by sin will say he is not conscious of sin. Cleansing from all sin by the blood of Jesus is far deeper than we can be conscious of, it is cleansing from all sin in the sight of God because the disposition of His Son is working out in every particular, not to our consciousness, but deeper than our consciousness. We are not cleansed more and more from all sin, if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we are cleansed from all sin. In our consciousness it works with a keen poignant knowledge of what sin is. The great need to-day amongst those of us who profess sanctification is the patience and ability to work out the holiness of God in every detail of our lives. When we are first adjusted to God the Holy Spirit works on the big general lines, then He begins to educate us down to the scruple,* He makes us sensitive over things we never before thought of. No matter what our experience may be we must beware of the curse of

* down to the scruple: to the smallest item

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



being stationary, we have to go on and on “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

If you have been making a great profession in your religious life but begin to find that the Holy Spirit is scrutinising you, let His searchlight go straight down, and He will not only search you, He will put everything right that is wrong; He will make the past as though it had never been; He will restore the years the cankerworm hath eaten; He will “blot out the handwriting of ordinances that is against you” (rv); He will put His Spirit within you and cause you to walk in His ways; He will make you pure in the deepest recesses of your personality. Thank God, Jesus Christ’s salvation is a flesh-and-blood reality!

Who is going to do all this in us? The Lord Jesus Christ. Let Jesus Christ proclaim His Gospel: we can have the very disposition of Jesus imparted to us, and if we have not got it we will have to tell God the reason why. We have to tell God we don’t believe He can do it—there are details of our lives He cannot put right, back tracks He cannot clear up, ramifications of evil He cannot touch. Thank God that is a lie! He can. If God cannot do that we have “followed cunningly devised fables.” That is where the fight has to be fought—along the line of what Jesus Christ can do in the human soul. Unless God has searched us and cleansed us and filled us with the Holy Spirit so that we are undeserving of censure in His sight,⁺⁺⁺ the Atonement has not been applied to our personal experience.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Are we willing to let God scrutinise us, or are we doing that worst of all things, trying to justify ourselves? People say if they are living up to all the light they have, meaning the light of conscience, they are all right. We may be consciously free of sin, but we are not justified on that account; we may be walking in the light of our conscience, but we are not justified on that account either (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:3-4); we are only justified in the sight of God through the Atonement at work in our inner life. God grant we may let His searching scrutiny go right through us until there is nothing God has not searched. We are far too big for ourselves, infinitely too big. The majority of us try to put ourselves in a bandbox,* but we cannot cabin and confine our lives. There is a purpose in every life that is in God's keeping of which we know little, but which He will fulfil if we let Him rightly relate us to Himself.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* bandbox: a small, round box made to hold neckbands or collars for shirts; metaphorically, something small, narrow, cloistered, self-contained



❖

The Need to Be a Christian

Never confuse personality with consciousness. Personality is the perplexing factor of my self which continually changes and yet remains the same. All we can deal with in psychology is consciousness, but God does not limit our salvation by our consciousness. The need to be a Christian is not simply that Jesus Christ's salvation may work in our conscious life, but that the unconscious realm of our personality may be protected from supernatural powers of which we know nothing. When the Holy Spirit enters into us He brings the marvellous revelation that God guards the unfathomable part of our personality; He goes to the springs of our personal life which we cannot touch, and prevents our being tampered with and bewitched out of God's purpose in Redemption. We belittle and misrepresent the Redemption if we refer it merely to our conscious life. Many spiritual testimonies get as far as—"Once I was that in conscious life, and now I am this, and Jesus did it." Well, thank God for that, but we are much more than we are conscious of, and if Jesus Christ only came to alter our conscious life, then the Redemption is "much ado about nothing." But when we come to examine the New Testament we find that Redemption does infinitely more than alter our conscious life; it safeguards the unconscious realm which we cannot touch. Our conscious experience is simply the doorway into the

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



only Reality there is, viz., the Redemption. We are not only “presenced with Divinity,” but protected by Deity in the depths of personality below the conscious realm.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Piratical Invasions from the Unconscious

Part of our personal life is conscious, but the greater part is unconscious, and every now and again the unconscious part emerges into the conscious and upsets us because we do not know where it comes from or where it leads to, and we get afraid of ourselves. There is a great deal more of “me” I do not know than that I do know. No man knows the springs of his motives or of his will; when we begin to examine ourselves we come to the threshold of the unconscious and cannot go any further. The Psalmist realised this when he prayed, “Search me, O God”; explore me to the beginning of my motives. Below the threshold of consciousness is the subconscious part of our personality which is full of mystery. There are forces in this realm which may interfere with us and we cannot control them, it is with this realm that the Spirit of God deals.

An island of the sea is easily explored, yet it may prove to be but the top of a mountain the greater part of which is hidden under the sea, going down to deeper depths than we can fathom. So our personality is infinitely more than we can be conscious of; consequently we must never estimate ourselves by the part we are conscious of, or be so stupid as to say we are only what we are conscious of. We are all in danger of doing this until we come across things in ourselves that surprise us. People

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



say, “Oh, I can’t understand myself!” Of course you cannot. “No one else understands me!” Of course they don’t; if they did, we would not be worth understanding. There is only one Being Who understands us, and that is our Creator. We must beware of estimating God’s salvation by our experience of it. Our experience is a mere indication in conscious life of an almighty salvation which goes far beyond anything we ever can experience.

Have we ever awakened to the fact that there are forces of evil around us greater than we can control? Jesus Christ by His Redemption not only saves us completely, but keeps us oblivious of the awful dangers there are outside: “the evil one toucheth him not” (iv). We are kept where we are unconscious of the need to be kept. Thank God for His safeguarding, for His salvation which keeps us waking and sleeping, conscious and unconscious, in danger and out of it.

There are supernatural powers and agencies that can play with us like toys whenever they choose unless we are garrisoned by God. The New Testament continually impresses this upon us: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the high places.” According to the Bible, spiritualism is not a trick, it is a fact. Man can communicate with beings of a different order from his own; he can put himself into a state of subjectivity in which spirits can appear. A medium commits the great crime psychically because he gives himself over to a force the nature of which he

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



does not know. He does great violence to his own rectitude and tampers with the balance of his sanity by putting himself into league with powers the character of which he does not know. Mediumship, whereby unseen spirits talk to men and women, will destroy the basis of moral sanity because it introduces a man into domains he had better leave alone. Drunkenness and debauchery are child's play compared with the peril of spiritualism. There is something uncannily awful about tampering with these supernatural powers, and in the speeding up of these days the necromantic element is increasing. Be on the look out for the manifestations that are not of God; all have the one sign, they ignore Jesus Christ. Beware of the advice: "Yield, give up your will." No man or woman has any right to yield himself or herself to any impression or any influence; immediately they do they are susceptible to all kinds of supernatural powers. There is only one Being to Whom we must yield, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Be sure that it is Jesus Christ to whom you yield, then the whole nature is safeguarded for ever.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Pushing Down God's Barriers

When the Holy Spirit comes in He makes us know that there are things we must remain ignorant of. Beware of entering into competition with the Holy Spirit. When we become curious and pry where we have no business to pry, we are eating of the fruit of the tree of which God said, "Thou shall not eat of it." The spiritualistic trend of to-day is an example of this very thing. Men and women are pushing down God's barriers and coming into contact with forces they cannot control. Unless we hand over the keeping of our personality to God to garrison, there are a hundred and one influences which can come into us which we never can control but which will soon control us. The blight of God rests on a man or woman who dares to take any way of knowing what is hidden other than Jesus Christ's way. He is the only One who is "worthy to open the book." If by intellectual curiosity we push away the barriers God has seen fit to put, we shall experience pain and suffering from which God will not protect us. We cannot play the fool with our bodies and souls and hoodwink God. Certain kinds of moral disobedience produce sicknesses which no physical remedy can touch, the only cure is obedience to Jesus Christ. The barriers are placed by a God who is absolutely holy, and He has told us clearly, "Not that way." If we turn to necromancy even in such seemingly ridiculous ways of telling fortunes in teacups or by cards or planchette, we commit a crime against our own souls, we are probing where we have no right to

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



probe. People say, “There’s no harm in it.” There is all the harm and the backing up of the devil in it. The only One who can open up the profound mysteries of life is God, and He will do it as He sees we can stand it (cf. Deuteronomy 29:29).

Soul is the expression of the personal spirit in the body, and it is the expression of soul that is either good or bad. What we *do* tells as much as what we are in the final issue. There are two entrances into the soul, viz., the body and the spirit. The body is within our control, the spirit is not, and if our spirit is not under the control of God there is nothing to prevent other spirits communicating through it to the soul and body. It is impossible to guard our spirit, the only One who can guard its entrances is God. If we hand ourselves over to His keeping we shall be kept not only from what we understand as dangers, but from dangers we have never even imagined. The conscious ring of our life is a mere phase; Jesus Christ did not die to save that only; it is the whole personality that is included in the Redemption. We are safeguarded from dangers we know nothing about. Thank God if the unseen realm does not impinge on you. There are people in whom the walls between the seen and unseen are exceedingly thin and they are constantly being tortured; the salvation of Jesus Christ can save them from it all. We are ill-taught if we look for results only in the earthlies when we pray. A praying saint performs far more havoc among the unseen forces of darkness than we have the slightest notion of.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Perils of Self-Ignorance

*Who can understand his errors? cleanse
Thou me from secret faults. (Psalm
19:12)*

Is there some fault God has been checking you about and you have left it alone? Be careful lest it end in a dominant sin. The errors are silent, they creep in on us, and when we stand in the light of Jesus Christ we are amazed to find the conclusions we have come to. The reason is that we have deluded ourselves. This self-security keeps us entirely ignorant of what we really are, ignorant of the things that make the salvation of Jesus Christ necessary. When we say to ourselves—“Oh well, I am no worse than anyone else,” that is the beginning; we shall soon produce blindness to our own defects and entrench ourselves around with a fictitious security. Jesus Christ has no chance whatever with the man who has the silent security of self-ignorance. When he hears anyone speak about deliverance from sin, he is untouched—“I have no need to be delivered.” Paul says, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds”—blinded to everything Jesus Christ stands for, and a man is to blame for getting there.

For a man to be at peace in his mind, undisturbed and at unity in himself, is a good thing, because in a

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

united personality there is freedom from self-consciousness; but if that peace and unity are without any consideration of Jesus Christ, it is a peace of death, a peace altogether apart from God, and when the Holy Spirit comes in He comes not as a Comforter, but as a thorough Disturber, and upsets this natural unity. No wonder men will do anything to avoid conviction of sin, anything to keep the searchlight of God out, anything to keep away from morbid introspection. But thank God for the men and women who have come to the end of themselves and who say, "Search me, O God, I cannot live any longer in a vain show," and He will do it. We are driven back every time to our relationship with God; it is the only safe thing.

If the Spirit of God can come into the unconscious part of our personality, the spirit of the devil can come there also. "The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot" (the personality of Judas) "to betray Him" (John 13:2); and Jesus said of Judas, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon" (John 6:70-71). Some people seem to think it is an amazingly clever thing to doubt Jesus Christ; it is an evil thing. Whenever the evil personality of unbelief asked the Lord anything, He never answered; but when the heart cries out, He answers immediately.

"And He, when He is come, will convict . . . of sin"—because men are immoral?—No, "*because they believe not on Me*" (John 16:8-9 rv). These words reveal the very essence of sin. Sin is not measured by a creed or social order: sin is measured by a Person, Jesus Christ. When the Holy

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

Spirit comes in He is unmistakable in the direction of His work, He goes direct to the thing that keeps us from believing in Jesus Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make us realise the meaning of the Redemption. As long as we believe it on the outside it does not upset our complacency, but we don't want to be perturbed on the inside. Paul says that some people have a "foolish heart"—"When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God" (Romans 1:21). In actual life they were amazingly shrewd and calculating, but their hearts were foolish towards God. Beware of turning your back on what you know is true because you do not want it to be real. Jesus Christ never says that a man is damned because he is a sinner; the condemnation is when a man sees what Jesus Christ came to do and will not let Him do it. That is the critical moment, "the judgement" (John 3:19 rv), in a man's life.

There are possibilities below the threshold of our life which no one knows but God. We cannot understand ourselves or know the spring of our motives, consequently our examination of ourselves can never be unbiased or unprejudiced. We are only safe in taking an estimate of ourselves from our Creator, not from our own introspection. But although introspection cannot profoundly satisfy us, we must not conclude that introspection is wrong. Introspection is right, because it is the only way we shall discover that we need God. Introspection without God leads to insanity. The people who have no tendency to introspect are described as "dead in trespasses and sins," quite happy, quite contented, quite moral, all they want is easily within their own grasp; but they are dead to the world to which Jesus

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Christ belongs, and it takes His voice and His Spirit to awaken them. If we estimate our life by the abundance of things which we possess consciously, there will come a drastic awakening one day because we shall have to leave it all at death. We shall have to leave this body, which keeps the personal spirit in conscious life, and go clean through the threshold of consciousness to where we do not know. It is a desperate thing to die if we have only been living in the conscious realm.

These aspects reveal the need to be a Christian as an enormous need. Thank God for the amazing security of His salvation! It keeps us not only in conscious life but from dangers of which we know nothing, unseen and hidden dangers, subtle and desperate.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Characteristics of the Soul

The Soul in Sinful Badness—Working Inwards

(a) *Gross Inquisitiveness*

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. (Genesis 3:6 rv)

There are some things of which we must be ignorant, because knowledge of them comes in no other way than by disobedience to God. In the life originally designed for Adam it was not intended that he should be ignorant of evil, but that he should know evil through understanding good. Instead, he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and thereby knew evil positively and good negatively; consequently none of us knows the order God intended. The knowledge of evil that comes through the Fall has given human nature a bias of insatiable curiosity about the bad, and only when we have been introduced into the Kingdom of God do we know good and evil in the way God constituted man to know them.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

If we want to discover things in the material universe we must be intellectually curious; but for finding things out scientifically it does not matter whether a man is good or bad. It is right to be curious about the natural world; if we are not intellectually curious we shall never learn anything. God never encourages laziness. But when we come to the domain Jesus Christ lives in, curiosity is of no avail. The only way to find out things in the moral universe is by obedience.

The philosophy of life is based on the topsy-turvy reasoning of going into things in order to find out about them, which is like saying you have to go into the mud before you can know what clean water is. "I must know the world"—if you do, you will only know good by contrast with evil. Modern teaching implies that we must be grossly experienced before we are of any use in the world. That is not true. Jesus Christ knew good and evil by the life which was in Him, and God intended that man's knowledge of evil should come in the same way as to our Lord, viz., through the rigorous integrity of obedience to God. When a man is convicted of sin he knows how terrific is the havoc sin has wrought in him and he knows with what a mighty salvation he has been visited by God; but it is only by obedience to the Holy Spirit that he begins to know what an awful thing sin is.

A great deal of our social work to-day is a history of moral house-breaking; men and women have gone into work to which God never sent them, consequently their moral and spiritual integrity has been violated. Work is taken up with the absurd

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

deification of pluck—“This thing has got to be done, and I must do it,” and they damage their souls in doing it because God is not there to protect. But when a man or woman is called of God, the facts he or she has to face never upset the equilibrium of the life because they are garrisoned by the presence of God. Too often when merely moral men or women go into bad surroundings they become soiled, no matter what their moral standard is; but the men and women who have been made pure by the Holy Ghost are kept like the light, unsullied.

(b) Growing Iniquity

And he said, . . . Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? . . . (Genesis 3:11-12; see Jude 4, 10)

Every child born of natural generation is innocent, but it is the innocence of ignorance. Naturally we are in an impaired state, and when our innocence is turned into knowledge we find to our humiliation how tremendously impaired it is. It is the ignorant innocence of determinedly being without the knowledge of God (Romans 1:18-23). It is safer to trust God’s revelation than our own innocence. Jesus Christ is either the supreme Authority on the human heart or He is not worth listening to, and He said: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed . . . ,”[†] and then comes that very ugly catalogue. Jesus did not say, “Into the human heart these things are injected,” but, “from within, out of

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

the heart of men all these evil things proceed.” If we trust our innocent ignorance to secure us, it is likely that as life goes on there will come a burst-up from underneath into our conscious life which will reveal to us that we are uncommonly like what Jesus Christ said.

Iniquity means turning out of the straight. Whenever anything begins to turn you out of the straight, stop and get it put right, no matter what else suffers. If you don't, you will grow in iniquity, and if you grow in iniquity you will call iniquity integrity; sensuality spirituality, and ultimately the devil, God. The most terrible verdict on the human soul is that it no longer believes in purity, and no man gets there without being himself to blame. There is such a thing as “Paradise Lost.”* The gates can never again be opened in this life, they are shut as inevitably as God shuts anything.

(c) Great Independence

*And the serpent said unto the woman,
Ye shall not surely die: for God doth
know that in the day ye eat thereof, then
your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall
be as God, knowing good and evil.
(Genesis 3:4-5 rv; see Genesis 3:22)*

Adam was intended by God to take part in his own development by a series of moral choices, to sacrifice his natural life to God by obedience and

* Dante's *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667.

thereby transform it into a spiritual life. Instead, he deliberately ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thereby became god over himself (Genesis 3:5). The characteristic of sin is independence of God—"I can look after myself; I know exactly how far to go. I intend to develop my life without God—why shouldn't I?" Whenever we say, "Why shouldn't I?" we tell Jesus Christ to retire and we take our life into our own hands, and instead of working from within and manifesting the beauty of holiness, we work inwards and become more and more self-centred, harder, and more indifferent to external things.

The knowledge of evil that came through the Fall gives a man a broad mind, but instead of instigating him to action it paralyses his action. Men and women whose minds are poisoned by gross experience of evil are marvellously generous with regard to other people's sins; they argue in this way—"To know all is to pardon all." Every bit of their broadmindedness paralyses their power to *do* anything. They know good only by contrast with evil, which is the exact opposite of God's order. When a man knows good and evil in the way God intended he should he becomes intolerant of evil, and this intolerance shows itself in an intense activity against evil. Jesus Christ never tolerated sin for one moment, and when His nature is having its way in us the same intolerance is shown. The marvel of the grace of God is that He can take the strands of evil and twistedness out of a man's mind and imagination and make him simple towards God. Restoration through the Redemption of Jesus Christ makes a man simple, and simplicity always shows

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



itself in action. There is nothing simple in the human soul or in human life. The only simple thing is the relationship of the soul to Jesus Christ, that is why the Apostle Paul says, "I fear, lest by any means, . . . your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Soul in Spiritual Beauty— Working Outwards

(a) *Golden Ignorance*

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7 see Luke 2:40, 52)

The presentation of true Christian experience brings us face to face with spiritual beauty; a beauty which can never be forced or imitated, because it is a manifestation from within of a simple relationship to God that is being worked out all the time. There is nothing simple saving a man's relation to God in Christ, and that relationship must never be allowed to be complicated. Our Lord's Childhood expresses this spiritual beauty, "And the child grew, and waxed strong, becoming [mg] full of wisdom. . . . And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age [mg]" (rv). The great characteristic of our Lord's life was that of "golden ignorance"; there were things He did not know and that He refused to know. Jesus Christ developed in the way God intended human beings to develop, and He exhibited the kind of life we ought to live when we have been born from above (rv mg). "But," you say, "how am I to live a life like Jesus Christ? I have not the 'golden ignorance' He had; I

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

have a heredity I had no say in, I am not holy nor likely to be.” The marvel of the Redemption is that Jesus Christ can put into any man His own hereditary disposition of holiness, and all the standards He gives are based on that disposition. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above [rv mg]” (John 3:7). The characteristic of a child is innocence, but remember there is a difference between the innocence of an ordinary child and the innocence of the Babe of Bethlehem. Natural innocence is based on ignorance, and as life goes on things awaken and prove that innocence is not purity, it is not based on an unsullied foundation. Profoundly speaking, a child is not pure, and yet the innocence of a child charms us because it makes visible all that we understand by purity.

(b) Growing Integrity

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17; see 2 Corinthians 11:3)

Integrity means the unimpaired state of anything. The “golden ignorance” manifested in our Lord’s Childhood and Boyhood was unimpaired when He reached Manhood and was manifested in a growing integrity. Jesus Christ carried out all that Adam failed

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

to do, and He did it in the simple way of obedience to His Father. It is not the passing of the years that matures the life of the Son of God in us, but obedience. As we obey we find that all the power of God is at our disposal, and we too can grow in spiritual beauty. Are we humble and obedient, learning as Jesus learned, or are we hurrying into experiences we have no right to? If we have to find reasons for doing what we do, we should not do it. The life of a child is one of simple obedience. We grow spiritually by obeying God through the words of Jesus being made spirit and life to us, and by paying attention to where we are, not to whether we are growing or not. We grow spiritually as our Lord grew physically, by a life of simple, unobtrusive obedience. If we do not obey God's Word and pay attention to the circumstances He has engineered for us, we shall not grow in spiritual beauty but will become lop-sided; our integrity will be impaired by something of the nature of inordinate lust. Remember, lust can be spiritual. Lust disputes the throne of God in us—"I have set my mind to this, or that, and I must have it at once." That will lead to gross experience. It means there is some desire, some inordinate affection or imagination we are not bringing into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The soul in spiritual beauty must be a born-again soul, i.e., something has come into it from without. Luke 1:35 ("wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God," rv mg) is the symbol of what happens when the Holy Ghost comes into us, our natural life is made the mother of the Son of God. We have to nourish the life of the Son of God in us, and we do it by bringing our

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



natural life into accordance with His life and transforming it into a spiritual life by obedience.

(c) *Grand Invincibility*

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15 rv; see Romans 16:19-20)

When we begin our life with God, we wish He would make it impossible for us to go wrong. If God did, our obedience would cease to be of value. When God created man, He put into his hands the free choice of good or evil, and that choice is there still, and the very test develops the character. The basis of life is antagonism in every domain, physical, mental, moral and spiritual, we only maintain health by fighting. Naturally we are not virtuous, but innocently ignorant. Disinclination to sin is not virtue, any more than innocence is purity. The danger is to make a virtue of necessity. It is fighting that produces virtue, moral stability on the inside. Virtue has character at the back of it, it has been tested and tried and has triumphed. Spiritual stability within produces holiness. Our Lord was invincible as a Man: "Who is worthy to open the book? . . . Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof" (Revelation 5:2, 9 rv). Jesus Christ proved Himself worthy, not only in the domain of God which we do not know, but in the domain of man which we do know. By means of His

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Redemption Jesus Christ makes us the sons and daughters of God, and we have to “put on the new man,”[†] in accordance with the life of the Son of God formed in us, and as we do we become invincible—“more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

“I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil” (rv). The Apostle Paul’s counsel fits on exactly with Genesis 3:15. By obeying the life that was in Him, Jesus Christ manifested the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. If we know good only by contrast with evil, we shall have the devilishness of the serpent through gross experience. But when we know good and evil in the way Jesus Christ knew them, all our subtle wisdom is on the side of the good and our dove-like nature is towards evil. When we are born again we have to obey the Spirit of God, and as we draw on the life of Jesus and learn to assimilate and carry out what He speaks to us, we shall grow in ignorance of certain things and be alive and alert only to what is God’s will for us.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The Temple of God

Desecration

And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought [rv] in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers. . . . (Mark 11:15⁺⁺; cf. John 2:13-17)

We bring to the New Testament a sentimental conception of our Lord; we think of Him as the “meek and mild and gentle Jesus” and make it mean that He was of no practical account whatever. Our Lord *was* “meek and lowly in heart,” yet watch Him in the Temple, meekness and gentleness were not the striking features there. We see instead a terrible Being with a whip of small cords in His hands, overturning the money-changers’ tables and driving out men and cattle.^{††} Is He the “meek and gentle Jesus” there? He is absolutely terrifying; no one dare interfere with Him. Why could He not have driven them out in a gentler way? Because passionate zeal had eaten Him up, with a detestation of everything that dared to call His Father’s honour into disrepute.

“Make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise”—the deification of commercial

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



enterprise. Everything of the nature of wrong must go when Jesus Christ begins to cleanse His Father's house.

If you have been laid hold of by the Spirit of God don't think it strange concerning the spring-cleaning God is giving you, and don't clamour for anything because it will have to go. The setting apart of my body by the Holy Ghost for a temple of God^{††} is a terror to everything in me that is not of God. Sensuality and sordidness lurk about the bodily temple until Jesus Christ cleanses it. Sensuality is that which gratifies my particular senses, it is the working of my body in connection with external circumstances whereby I begin to satisfy myself. Sensuality may be unutterably disgusting or it may be amazingly refined, but it is based on the wrong thing and has to go; it can have nothing to do with the temple of God, i.e., with man as God created him.

My body is designed to be a "temple of the Holy Ghost," and it is up to me to stand for the honour of Jesus Christ in my bodily practices. When the Spirit of God comes in, He cleanses the temple and does not let one darling sin lurk. The one thing Jesus Christ insists on in my bodily life is chastity. As individuals we must not desecrate the temple of God[†] by tampering with anything we ought not to tamper with; if we do, the scourge of God will come. Immediately the Spirit of God comes in we begin to realise what it means—everything that is not of God has to be turned clean out. People are surprised and say, "I was told God would give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; well, I asked for the Holy Spirit

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

and expected that He would bring me joy and peace, but I have had a terrible time ever since.” That is the sign He has come, He is turning out the “money-changers” and the “cattle,”^{†††} i.e., the things that were making the temple into a trafficking place for self-realisation. We soon find why the Gospel can never be welcome. As long as we speak winsomely about the “meek and gentle Jesus,” and the beautiful ideas the Holy Spirit produces when He comes in, people are captivated, but that is not the Gospel. The Gospel does away with any other ground to stand on than that of the Atonement. Speak about the peace of heaven and the joy of the Lord, and men will listen to you; but tell them that the Holy Spirit has to come in and turn out their claim to their right to themselves, and instantly there is resentment—“I can do what I like with my body; I can go where I choose.” The majority of people are not blackguards and criminals, living in external sin, they are clean-living and respectable, and it is to such that the scourge of God is the most terrible thing because it reveals that the natural virtues may be in idolatrous opposition to God.

“. . . and the seats of them that sold doves.”[†]I may not be giving way to sensuality and sordidness, but I may be crooning a dirge of self-pity—doves in a cage are always cooing—“Oh it is so hard for me, you don’t know what I have to give up; doing the will of God is such an enormous cost.” Consecration by the Spirit of God means merciless dealing with that kind of thing, He has no sympathy with it. How can we be of the slightest use to God if we are always whining about our own condition? The

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

compromise arising from self-pity is quite sufficient to extinguish the whole purpose of God in a life.

“. . . and would not suffer that any men should carry any vessel through the temple.” The Spirit of God will not allow me to use my body for my own convenience; the whole limit must be God’s. I am not to serve my own ends with my body, I am to serve the ends of Jesus Christ and be a devoted disciple of His. Lust (the spirit of—I must have this thing at once) can have no part or lot in the house of God. So many spend their time in educating themselves for their own convenience—“I want to educate myself, and realise myself.” I must not use the temple of God[†] for the convenience of self-love; my body must be preserved from trafficking for myself. One of the hardest scourges of God comes just here.

“And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.”^{††}Have I been doing this? What has my soul been busy with during this past year? What have I been thinking in my mind and imagination? I may have been talking about holiness, but what has it meant to me? Is my body the temple of the Holy Ghost^{††} and am I taking care to see that it is? Is my imagination, and reasoning, and thinking regarded as the house of God? or am I making it a house of merchandise—making it more for me and mine? wanting to go through this in order to grasp something for myself? God does not use us as an exhibition of what He can do. Jesus Christ said, “I am . . . the Truth”; therefore the temple of my body

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



must be consecrated to Him. The Temple was to be the house of prayer for all the nations,^{††} and my personal life is to be the same. God will bring some extraordinary people to traffic through our temple. Think how we have trafficked through Him! Natural affinities do not count for anything in the spiritual life, but only the affinities produced by the Spirit of God (cf. 1 John 1:7).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Desolation

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (Matthew 23:37-38)

The historic Temple was twice cleansed by our Lord; then when He came again to Jerusalem He no longer spoke of it as “My Father’s house,” but, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”[†] A terrible pronouncement, and a terrible possibility in our own lives. It is appallingly true that we may get to the place where Jesus can no longer say of us, “My Father’s house”; where He can no longer give us the benefit of scourging and cleansing, but can only retire, a weeping Christ, over our wilfulness. “How often would I . . . , and ye would not!”[†] You have spurned and despised every messenger I sent, and now I say unto you, “Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”^{††}

Is yours a desolated life, deserted in soul? Then in plain honesty don’t blame your father or mother or anyone in your family; don’t blame the fact that

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

you had no education, or that someone thwarted you when you were sixteen, or that you were heartbroken when you were twenty-four, or had a business disaster when you were thirty. These things may be facts, but they are not to the point. Nothing that transpires outside me can make the tiniest difference to me morally unless I choose to let it. The desolation described by Jesus was brought on by the people of God themselves and by them alone. Is God saying to you, “You have spurned and hated and murdered My messengers”? If so, it will be a painful thing for your desolated soul to say—“Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”^{†††}—Blessed is the one who stabs and hurts and disillusioned me as to where I am.

A sinner who has never been cleansed by the direct act of the Lord may hear the Gospel and receive the Holy Spirit, and He will do all the cleansing. Compare that condition with one who has backslidden, one who had been cleansed by God, but has allowed the traffic to get back, sensuality, self-seeking, self-interest; the “cattle” are all back, the “doves” and the “money-changers’ tables,”^{†††} with a deepened and increased element of thieving. It is no longer making more for me and mine, it is a downright thieving of God’s time and opportunities, and God’s sacredness in other lives. That is what a spiritual thief does. Such a soul has to come back to God in desolation. It is no use to tell the backslider to receive the Holy Spirit, he cannot; the Holy Spirit will not be received by him; he has to come back to God in desolation. In the parable of the two sons some of the elements in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin are missed out—

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

the shepherd goes to seek the lost sheep, and the woman searches for the lost coin; but the father does not go to the far country, the son has to leave the pigs and what pigs eat and come back; and if you have backslidden you will have to do the same. “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and return unto the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously [mg]” (rv). Take with you words and say, “By mine iniquity have I fallen”—by lust, by worldliness, by self-interest, you know exactly what it is. You have been trying to find comfort here and there and you will never get it; your soul is night, your heart is steel; you have spurned and trodden under and despised God’s messengers, and you will only see God when you say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”^{†††} Then says God—“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him” (Hosea 14:4 rv).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Dedication

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17⁺)

Am I prepared to recognise that my body is a temple of the Holy Ghost⁺? You say, “I did not know there were so many things in my life unsuited to the temple of God.” Then let God turn them out—“I don’t know whether He will.” You do. Cannot you tell when Jesus Christ lays His scourge on the back of the thing that should not be there? Never for one moment sympathise with anyone who says, “I don’t know how to get to God.” There is no one in the world more easy to get to than God. Only one thing prevents us from getting there, and that is the refusal to tell ourselves the truth. Am I prepared to receive the Holy Spirit? prepared to recognise that my body and soul and spirit are meant to be “presenced with Divinity”? Jesus Christ did not live and die to be our Example only, but that He might put us in the place where He is by means of His wonderful Atonement. Reverence your own body and soul and spirit for this one purpose, and reverence everyone else’s, for the same purpose.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Dedication means setting apart to some sacred purpose. The historic Temple was to be “the house of prayer for all the nations”^{†††} (rv), and my body and soul and spirit is to be God’s house of prayer, preserved for devotion. I have to realise that my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost^{††}, the place where the work of intercession is carried on. Prayer based on the Redemption creates what could not be until the prayer is offered. The Spirit needs the nature of a believer as a shrine in which to offer His intercessions. My personality, as far as I am conscious of it, and a great deal more than I am conscious of, is the shrine of the Holy Ghost. Have I recognised that it is? If I have, I shall be amazingly careful to keep it undefiled for Him. I am responsible before God for conducting my body as the temple of the Holy Ghost.^{††} Am I doing it, or is my body dictating to God, telling Him what it must do? If I only want God to keep my body healthy, He never will; I have to govern and rule my body as a temple of the Holy Ghost. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” When I become a Christian I have exactly the same body as before, but I have to see that my members which were used as “servants of sin”[†] are now used as “servants of righteousness.” The Apostle Paul tells us how it is done; he says, “I keep under my body,” I “buffet” it (rv), and make it obey, until bodily senses and spiritual intuitions work together smoothly and naturally. Our bodies are not our shame, but our glory, and if we keep them as a temple of the Holy Ghost we shall find that the life of Jesus will be manifested in our mortal flesh.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

We have to recognise that our personal life is meant for Jesus Christ; that we have been designed not for ourselves but for our Lord and Master. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”^{††} How significant is our Lord’s insistence on His own Person in relation to human destiny. The modern jargon is all for self-realisation; we educate ourselves for the purpose of self-realisation, we select our friendships for self-realisation purposes. Jesus says, “Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake”—deliberately fling it away—“shall find it”^{†††} (rv). The one great dominant recognition is that my personal self belongs to Jesus Christ. The counterfeit is giving ourselves as devotees to a cause. Thousands of people are losing their life for the sake of a cause; this is perilously wrong because it is so nearly right. Anything that rouses us to act on the line of principles instead of a relationship to a person fosters our natural independence and becomes a barrier to yielding to Jesus Christ. Have we recognised that our body is a temple of the Holy Ghost,^{††} or are we jabbering busybodies, so taken up with Christian work that we have no time for the Christ whose work it is, no time for Him in the morning, no time for Him at night, because we are so keen on doing the things that are called by His Name? What we have to watch to-day is the competition of Causes against devotion to Jesus Christ. One life yielded to God at all costs is worth thousands only touched by God. “Let him . . . take up his cross, and follow Me.”^{††} What is the cross? The cross is the deliberate recognition of what my personal life is for, viz., to be given to Jesus Christ; I have to take up that cross daily and prove that I am

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



no longer my own. Individual independence has gone, and all that is left is personal passionate devotion to Jesus Christ through identification with His Cross. “And ye are not your own; for ye are [kjv] bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20⁺ rv).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Arriving at Myself

By the Surgery of Providence

But when he came to himself . . . (Luke 15:17 rv)

It is difficult to realise that it is God who arranges circumstances for the whole mass of human beings; we come to find, however, that in the Providence of God there is, as it were, a surgical knife for each one of us individually, because God wants to get at the things that are wrong and bring us into a right relationship to Himself. At first we trust our ignorance and call it innocence; we trust our innocence and call it purity, until God in His mercy surrounds us with providences which act as an alchemy transmuting things and showing us our real relation to ourselves. To say, "Oh, I'm sick of myself," is a sure sign that we are not. When we really are sick of ourselves we will never say so, but will gladly come to the end of ourselves. So long as we say, "I'm tired of myself," it is a sign that we are profoundly interested in ourselves.

(a) The Sin of Self-Importance

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. (Luke 15:12 rv)

This is a picture of one who has become spiritually independent; the portion of goods from the Father has been received, there has been a real experience of God's grace, but there is the letter "I" about it, a self-assertive determination to carry things out in my own way. The most powerful type of spiritual delusion is produced in this way; it is based on ignorance of what we should do with the substance the Father has given us: we should devote it absolutely to Him. If we forget this we are certainly in danger of the sin of self-importance. It begins with the realisation that God does do His recreating work through us if we are children of His—"Yes, God did use me," you say. God will use anything or anyone (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). Unless there is abandonment to the Lord Jesus self-importance will always be inclined to utilise God's blessing for its own ends. No man can abandon to Jesus Christ without an amazing humiliation to his own self-importance. We are all tremendously important until the Holy Ghost takes us in hand, then we cease to be important and God becomes all-important.

(b) *The Sordidness of Self-Indulgence*

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. . . . (Luke 15:13 rv)

The soul that has claimed its portion and become spiritually independent may ultimately be degraded into feeding pigs and eating with them. More awful things are said about backsliding than about any other sin. If we do not maintain a walk in accordance with the perception given, we shall fall as degradingly low as we were high before. The depth of degradation is measured by the height of attainment. Don't deal with it on the surface and say, "I'm not built that way, I have none of those sordid tastes." The nature of any dominating lust is that it keeps us from arriving at a knowledge of ourselves. For instance, a covetous man will believe he is very generous. Thank God for the surgery of providence by means of which He deals with these absurdities. The way God brings us to know ourselves is by the kind of people He brings round us. What we see to condemn in others is either the discernment of the Holy Ghost or the reflection of what we are capable of ourselves. We always notice how obtuse other people are before we notice how obtuse we ourselves are. If we see meanness in others, it is because we ourselves are mean (Romans 2:1). If we

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

are inclined to be contemptuous over the fraud in others it is because we are frauds ourselves. We have to see ourselves as God sees us, and when we do it keeps us in the right place—"My God, was I ever like that to Thee? so opinionated and conceited, so set on my own ends, so blind to myself?" These things, which are most unpalatable, are true, nevertheless. Beware of any belief which makes you self-indulgent; it comes from the pit however beautiful it sounds. It is an indication of a wrong relationship that does not spring from the attitude of abandon; and we become perverse and remain ignorant of the fact that we need to be guarded by God.

(c) The Sorrow of Self-Introspection

*But when he came to himself he said,
How many hired servants of my father's
have bread enough and to spare, and I
perish here with hunger! (Luke
15:17 rv)*

There is no pain on earth to equal the pain of wounded self-love. Unrequited love is bad enough, but wounded self-love is the cruellest thing in human life because it shifts the whole foundation of the life. The prodigal son had his self-love wounded; he was full of shame and indignation because he had sunk to such a level. There was remorse, but no repentance yet, no thought of his father.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. . . . And he arose, and came to his father.” That is repentance. The surgery of Providence had done its work, he was no longer deluded about himself. A repentant soul is never allowed to remain long without being gripped by the love of God.

*Man, what is this, and why art thou despairing?
God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.*

Let the surgery of providence drive you straight to God. The Spirit of God works from the standpoint of God, i.e., from a standpoint inconceivable to the natural man. The words “miraculous” and “supernatural” are disliked to-day through the influence of modern psychology on spiritual work, i.e., the attempt to define on psychical lines, materialistically psychical lines, how God works in a soul. The surgery of the providence of God will break up all ignorance of ourselves. It is impossible for a human being to guard his unconscious personality, only God can do it. If we have not abandoned to Jesus Christ we are likely to be trapped on every hand by our complete ignorance of ourselves, and panic will result. Panic leads us away from the control of God and leaves us not only beyond our own control but possibly under the control of other forces. The one safeguard is abandonment to the Lord Jesus, receiving His Spirit, and obeying Him.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

By the Surprises of Personality

And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one. (John 17:22)

(a) My Right to My Individual Self

If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (Matthew 16:24⁺ rv)

The natural is not sinful, neither is it spiritual; the ruling disposition of my personality makes it either sinful or spiritual. The natural life and individuality are practically one and the same. Individuality is the characteristic of a child, it is the natural husk of personality and it is there by God's creation to preserve the personal life; but if individuality does not become transfigured by the grace of God, it becomes objectionable, egotistical and conceited, interested only in its own independence. When natural independence merges into independence of God it becomes sin; and sin isolates and destroys and ultimately damns the personal life. Jesus Christ lays His axe at the root of independence. There is nothing dearer to the heart of the natural man than

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



independence. Wherever there is authority, I go against it in order to show I am independent; I insist on my right to myself, my right to an independent opinion. That spirit does not fit in with Jesus Christ at all. Independence and pride are esteemed by the natural man, but Jesus says, “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

The statements of Jesus about discipleship produce embarrassment in the natural man: “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him” (John 6:66). If we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our independent right to our individual self must go, and go altogether. We evade the claims of Jesus by saying they have a mystical meaning and we try to get away from their intensely practical rugged meaning. “If any man would come after Me,” said Jesus, “let him deny himself”^{††} (rv), i.e., deny his right to his individual self. Our Lord always mentions the most intimate relationships in connection with discipleship, relationships which make our human life what it is by the creation of God, and He implies that any one of these relationships may enter into competition in some form or other with His call, and if they do, He says it must be prompt obedience to Himself. It is not only sin that awakens resentment in the natural heart of man to the claims of Jesus Christ, but individuality which has been abused by the disposition of sin. The Holy Spirit continually urges us to sign away our right to our individual self to Jesus. “Learn of Me,” says Jesus, “for I am meek and lowly in heart.” How few of us do learn of Him! We cling to our individuality like a drowning man to a

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

straw—“Of course God will recognise my individual peculiarisms and prejudices.” Jesus Christ pays attention to one thing only—“If you would be My disciple, deny your right to yourself.” Individual peculiarisms are excrescences belonging to the husk of the personality and are the things that produce all the difficulty. When the disposition of sin has been dealt with by identification with the Death of Jesus, the natural individual life still remains. Individuality must be transfigured by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that means a sword going through the natural. Over and over again the Holy Spirit brings us to the place which in evangelical language is called “full surrender.” Remember what full surrender is. It is not giving up this thing and that, but the deliberate giving up of my right to my individual self. As long as we are slaves to our ideas of individuality we distort the presentation of our Lord’s teaching about discipleship.

(b) The Recognition of My Personal Self

He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it. (Matthew 10:39^{††})

We have to recognise that our personal life is meant for Jesus Christ. The modern jargon is for self-realisation—“I must save my life”: Jesus Christ says, “whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.”^{†††} The cross is the deliberate recognition of what our personal self is for, viz., to be given to Jesus, and we take up that cross daily and prove we

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

are no longer our own. Whenever the call is given for abandon to Jesus Christ, people say it is offensive and out of taste. The counterfeit of abandon is that misleading phrase “Christian service.” I will spend myself for God, I will do anything and everything but the one thing He asks me to do, viz., give up my right to myself to Him. “But surely Christian service is a right thing?” Immediately we begin to say that, we are off the track. It is the right *Person*, the Lord Jesus Christ, not the right thing: don’t stop short of the Lord Himself—“*for My sake.*” The great dominating recognition is that my personal self belongs to Jesus. When I receive the Holy Spirit, I receive not a possible oneness with Jesus Christ, but a real intense oneness with Him. The point is, will I surrender my individual life entirely to Him? It will mean giving up not only bad things, but things which are right and good (cf. Matthew 5:29-30). If you have to calculate what you are willing to give up for Jesus Christ, never say that you love Him. Jesus Christ asks us to give up the best we have got to Him, our right to ourselves. There is only this one crisis, and in the majority of lives it has never been reached, we are brought up to it again and again, and every time we go back. Self-realisation must be renounced in order that Jesus Christ may realise Himself in us.

(c) The Realisation of Christian Self

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

*with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.
(Matthew 3:11^{####})*

This is neither the individual self, nor the personal self, but the Christian self. “. . . that they may be one, even as We are one.” How is this oneness to come about? By the baptism of the Holy Ghost and in no other way. When the Spirit of Jesus comes into me He comes into my personal spirit and makes me incandescent with God. The individual peculiarisms are seen no longer but only the manifestation of oneness with God. One person can merge with another person without losing his identity; but an individual remains definitely segregated from every other individual. When the disciples were baptised by the Holy Ghost they became witnesses to Jesus (see Acts 1:8; 4:13[†]). When a man falls in love his personality emerges and he enters into relationship with another personality. Love is not anything for me at all; love is the deliberate giving of myself right out to another, the sovereign preference of my person for another person. The idea, I must have this person for myself, is not love, but lust. Lust counterfeits love in the same way that individuality counterfeits personality. The realisation of the Christian self means that Jesus Christ is manifested in my natural life—not Christian sentiment, but *Christian self*. Individuality is not lost, it is transfigured by identification with the Person of Jesus.



Is there any use in beating about the bush? We call ourselves Christians, what does our Christianity amount to practically? Has it made any difference to my natural individual life? It cannot unless I deliberately give up my right to myself to Jesus, and as His disciple begin to work out the personal salvation He has worked in. Independence must be blasted right out of a saint. God's providence seems to pay no attention whatever to our individual ideas because He is after only one thing—"that they may be one, even as We are one." It may look like a thorough breaking up of the life, but it will end in a manifestation of the Christian self in oneness with God. Sanctification is the work of Christ in me, the sign that I am no longer independent, but completely dependent upon Him. Sin in its essential working is independence of God: personal dependence upon God is the attitude of the Holy Ghost in my soul.

Zeitoun, Egypt Sunday morning service, December 17, 1916*

*Zeitoun (zay TOON). An area 6 miles NE of Cairo. Site of YMCA camp, Egypt General Mission compound and a large base area for British, Australian and New Zealand troops. Site of the Imperial School of Instruction (1916-1919).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Saints in the Disaster of Worldliness

Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12^a (rv)

The language of the Book of Revelation is easily misunderstood. For instance, when we use the word “beast” we mean something particularly offensive to our sensibilities; the “beast” in the Book of Revelation is anything but offensive; he is not an immoral beast, socially understood, but a beast from God’s standpoint.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Patience of the Enshrined Life of God

Here is the patience of the saints.

The revelation of God in the Bible works in a twofold way: first the Incarnate Fact, our Lord Jesus Christ; second, the interpretation of that Fact enshrined in the lives of those who are “called to be saints.”[†] A saint is one in whom the life of Jesus Christ is formed.

The description given in Revelation 14:9-11 is the description of prosperous worldliness such as has never been seen before, but from God’s standpoint it is a moral disaster, and I should say we are very near the type of civilised life that this refers to. What is described in the climax is true in every stage until the climax is reached. After the War* this combine of everything, in which it will be impossible to have religion independent of an organisation, or business independent of a federation, will take place.

(a) In the Perversion of Religion

* the War: World War I (1914-1918).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand . . .^{†††} (rv)

This is the description of a man who has given the best he has got to the ruling power that gives him what he wants. If he is consecrated entirely there, he will meet with undoubted prosperity. He receives “a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand” (symbols of thought and grasp), a mark of the time in which he lives, cut off from everything other than the present order of things. The worship that should be given to God is given to “the beast and his image.”^{†††} The saint has to endure, keeping “the word of My patience,” maintaining the enshrined life of God in the midst of this perversion of religion. We can always recognise the mark of the beast if we put this one simple test—was it necessary for Jesus Christ to have lived and died to produce that attitude to life?

(b) In the Punishment of Revelation

*. . . he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled unmixed in the cup of His anger.
(Revelation 14:10 rv)*



❖

—intoxicated by the elemental wrath of God. The love of God and the wrath of God are obverse sides of the same thing. If we are morally rightly related to God we see His love side, but if we reverse the order and get out of touch with God, we come to a place where we find everything is based on wrath—not that God is angry, like a Moloch,* but wrath is inevitable; we cannot get out of it. If we give the best we have got to worldliness we shall one day wake up to the revelation of what we have done and shall experience the wrath of God, mingled with ungovernable despair—“I gave the best I had got, not to God, but to the world, and I can’t alter now.” This is not only true with individuals, but with the whole of civilised life. Take the good, thoroughgoing, prosperous, worldly business men of any country who have worshipped at the shrine of a pagan worldliness, you will find exactly what Jesus says, their hearts fail them—“men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world” (rv). Men who have worshipped mammon have the mark of the beast in thought and grasp, and when the realisation of where they are comes, they “faint for fear.” Civilisations will get there; and the panic in any country will be beyond all limits. God is the controller of History.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* moloch: tyrannical power requiring sacrifice to be appeased



❖

(c) In the Pain of Recession

*and the smoke of their torment
ascendeth up for ever and ever.
(Revelation 14:11)*

That is the pictorial way of presenting the atmosphere of the wrath in which civilisations will be found when once God is manifested. When mediaeval artists wanted to portray a crime they usually accompanied the scene with bad weather. According to God's Book, this is not merely pictorial, but a representation of what will actually take place. "The smoke of their torment" refers not only to the physical condition of individuals, but to the terrific disturbance in Nature which is connected with it. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air."

Take the popular idea of Christianity and compare it with the patience of the saints, and you will see where we are. Popular Christianity says, "We must succeed." The Book of Revelation says success cannot be marked, it is impossible. The New Testament conception of spirituality in the world is a forlorn hope always, by God's design. Take the parable of the Sower^{††}, which is the key to all the parables, only one-fourth of the seed sown brings forth fruit in this dispensation. We are determined to be successful; the Apostle Paul says we are called upon to be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). In this dispensation it is a day of humiliation in the lives of

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



the saints, as it was in the life of our Lord. We have to remain steadfastly patient to God through the whole thing.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Practice of the Expressed Love of God

. . . they that keep the commandments of God.

What are the commandments? “The first of all the commandments is, . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: the second is . . . this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:30-31^{†††}).

(a) Among the Unseemly

“*Love . . . doth not behave itself unseemly . . .*” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5^{rv}). In prosperous worldliness there is any amount that is unseemly, not from the social standpoint, but from the saint’s standpoint. The way worldly sagacity argues is—Pay men back in their own coin, if you have been deceived, deceive in order to get your rights—“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”^{†††} You cannot do that if you are a saint. We must practise the expressed love of God and behave among the unseemly as the children of God. There is no test on earth to equal it. There is unseemly laughter at the saint—“Where is your success? What have you done? what is the good of missionary enterprise? what is the use of

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

talking about spiritual things to soldiers?” If the saints are not practising the expression of the love of God, they will be discouraged and give up. Discouragement is “disenchanted egotism”; “I have not got what I wanted, therefore I am not going on, I give it up. I have lost my conceit.”

“Love . . . taketh not account of evil . . .” (rv); it does not ignore the fact that there is evil, but it does not take it into calculation. Someone has done us a wrong, and we say, “Now I must be careful. . . .” Our attitude is to be that of the expressed love of God, and if we take the evil into account we cannot express His love. We must deal with that one as God has dealt with us. There is no bigger, stiffer job for a saint than that.

(b) Among the Unspiritual

“*Love . . . rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth . . .*” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 6rv). Prosperous worldliness is unspiritual and those who do not pray and who are not at all holy get on well. There is so much nervous energy spent in spiritual exercises, in giving time to study, that the temptation is to let these things slip. We have to express the love of God and see that we do not become unspiritual among the unspiritual tendencies around us. If you listen to the talk of the day in which we live you find it is sagacious common sense that rules, the spiritual standpoint is taboo, like a fairy-story. The question is, will we maintain the spiritual standpoint, or say, “oh yes, it is rather too high”? We do not need Jesus Christ and the Bible for the ordinary common-sense

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

standpoint, and if in a crisis we act according to common sense we do not express the love of God.

(c) Among the Unshameable

“ . . . beareth all things, . . . endureth all things ” (1 Corinthians 13:7). After every phase of a particular type of successful civilised life, we get the anti-conventionalist who tries to develop the unshameable attitude and brags about things. It is called pluck; it is not, it is shamelessness, and it is easy to remain unspiritual before that.

At the basis of every one of these matters, the unseemly, the unspiritual, the unshameable, is something that is right, a strong basis of common sense; but the test for the saint is not common sense, but “Is this what Jesus Christ stood for?” “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel,” says the Apostle Paul. If you dare to stand for Jesus Christ and His presentation of things in certain crises, men will separate you from their company, treat you with unutterable contempt. “Blessed are ye,” said Jesus, “when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake” (Luke 6:22[†]). We have to express the love of God in the midst of these things.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Power of the Enshrouded Loyalty to God

. . . and the faith of Jesus.

The faith of Jesus is exhibited in His temptation[†] and can be summed up in His own words: “I came . . . not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”^{††} Jesus remained steadfastly loyal to His Father, and the saint has to keep the faith of Jesus.

(a) Under the Success of Civilisation (Matthew 4:3-4)

In the Temptation[†] the sagacity of Satan is seen from every standpoint—“If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread”[†] (rv): “Look after men’s bodies, feed them and heal them, and you will get men under Your control.” Was Satan right? would Jesus Christ have gained the Kingship of men if He had put their needs first? Read John 6:15—“Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone” (rv). It is this temptation which has betaken the Christian Church to-day. We worship Man, and God is looked upon as a blessing machine for humanity. We find it in the most spiritual

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

movements of all. For instance, watch how subtly the missionary call has changed. It is not now the watchword of the Moravian* call, which saw behind every suffering heathen the Face of Christ: the need has come to be the call. It is not that Jesus Christ said “Go,” but that the heathen will not be saved if we do not go. It is a subtle change that is sagacious, but not spiritual. The need is never the call: the need is the opportunity. Jesus Christ’s first obedience was to the will of His Father—“Lo, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will,”† and, “As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” (rv). The saint has to remain loyal to God in the midst of the machinery of successful civilisation, in the midst of worldly prosperity, and in the face of crushing defeat.

(b) Under the Success of Ceremonialism (Matthew 4:5-7)

“If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down . . .”† (rv). “Do some supernatural wonder, use apparatus whereby You will paralyse men’s wits and stagger them, and the world will be at Your feet.” In the midst of the success of worldliness we get an outburst of spiritualism, of supernaturalism, fire called down from heaven by the authority of the devil, and all kinds of signs and wonders whereby people say, “Lo, here is Christ.”† Jesus said, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” I believe in the Second Coming, but not always in its

* The Moravian Mission traces its beginnings to the 1730s, to a Christian community founded by Count Nicholas Zinzendorf.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

advocates. They are apt to ignore altogether what Jesus said.

(c) Under the Success of Compromise (Matthew 4:8-10)

“All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.”[†] “Be diplomatic, be wise, compromise in a wise shrewd way and You will get everything under Your own control.” That is the kind of thing the peace of the world is based on, we call it “diplomacy.” Jesus maintained His faith in God’s methods in spite of the temptations which were so sagacious and wise from every standpoint, saving the standpoint of the Spirit of God. The insinuation of putting men’s needs first, success first, has entered into the very domain of evangelism, and has substituted “the passion for souls” for “the passion for Christ,” and we experience shame when we realise how completely we have muddled the whole thing by not maintaining steadfast loyalty to Jesus Christ.

You will find the things God uses, not to develop you, but to develop the manifestation of God in you, are just the things we are apt to ignore—successful worldliness, other people, trials of our faith—these are the things that either make a saint un-saintly, or give God the chance to exhibit Himself. The most delightful saint is the one who has been chastened through great sorrows. The type of character produced by great sorrows is different from that produced by the pressure of the “mosquito” order of things. The saints are unnoticed, there is no flourish of trumpets about them, nothing self-

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



advertised, but slowly and surely this characteristic comes out—the stamp of a family likeness to Jesus Christ, and men take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus.

Zeitoun, Egypt Sunday morning service, August 26, 1917*

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* Zeitoun (zay TOON). An area 6 miles NE of Cairo. Site of YMCA camp, Egypt General Mission compound and a large base area for British, Australian and New Zealand troops. Site of the Imperial School of Instruction (1916-1919).

❖

“Out of the Wreck I Rise”

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Romans 8:37

God does not do what false Christianity makes out—keep a man immune from trouble, there is no promise of that; God says, “I will be with him in trouble.” The moral frontier where Jesus Christ works is the great dominant note in the New Testament, the external manifestation comes later. At present it is the relationship on the inside that is being dealt with—the personal preference of the soul for God, which is the great fruit of Christianity. No matter what actual troubles in the most extreme form get hold of a man’s life, not one of them can touch the central citadel, viz., his relationship to God in Christ Jesus.

This is one of the greatest assets of the spiritual aspect of Christianity, and it seems to be coming to the fore just now. Before the War* it may have been imaginary to talk about these things in the universal sense but now they are up-to-date in thousands of lives. The “wrecks” are a fact. Mental, moral, physical and spiritual wrecks are all around us today. The Apostle Paul is not talking of imaginary sentimental things, but of desperately actual things,

* the War: World War I (1914-1918).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



and he says we are “more than conquerors” in the midst of them all, super-conquerors, not by our wits or ingenuity, our courage or pluck, or anything other than the fact that not one of them can separate a man from the love of God in Christ Jesus, even though he should go into the “belly of hell.” We are inclined to ask God to do the magic business, to perform a miracle which will alter our external circumstances; but if we are ever going to understand what the God whom Jesus Christ presents is like, we have to remember that that is not His first job. The first thing God does is to alter a man’s disposition on the inside, and then enable him to deal with the “mess” on the outside. God never coerces a man, he has to take God’s way by his own moral choice; we reverse the order and demand of God that He does our work. The tawdry things that have been presented as the findings of Christianity make one impatient.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Cares of Tribulation

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation . . . ?

The word “tribulation” has its root in the Latin *tribulum*—a sledge for rubbing out corn; literally, a thing with teeth that tears. Christianity is not prayer meetings and times of fellowship, these are magnificent and essential in certain conditions for the manifestation of the Christian life, but when tribulation is tearing you to bits, they cannot be. Tribulation describes a section of a man’s life. Rightly or wrongly, we are exactly in the condition we are in. I am sorry for the Christian who has not some part of his circumstances he wishes was not there! People with psychological “elbows” bring tribulation. Let the tribulations be what they may—exhausting, galling, fatiguing—they are never noble things, “Beelzebub” miseries that buzz over the windows of a man’s soul so that he cannot see out—we can be “more than conquerors” in them if we maintain our belief in the relationship God has to us in Christ Jesus.

“To him that overcometh . . .”† God does not give us the overcoming life: He gives life to the man who overcomes. If in every case of tribulation, from gnats to the cruelty of the sword, we take the step as if there were no God to assist us, we shall find He is

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



there. The idea is not that we get the victory, but that the Victor has got us. “But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place” (2 Corinthians 2:14 rv).



THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Waters of Anguish

or anguish . . . ? (rv)

“Anguish” comes from a word meaning to press tightly, to strangle, and the idea is not a bit too strong for the things people are going through. They are not sentimental things, but real things, where every bit of a man’s life is twisted and wrung out to the last ebb. Can the love of God in Christ hold there, when everything says that God is cruel to allow it, and that there is no such thing as justice and goodness? Shall anguish separate us from the love of God? No, we are more than conquerors in it, not by our own effort but by the fact that the love of God in Christ holds. If we look for God in the physical domain we shall see Him nowhere; if we look for Him in the kingdom on the inside, in the moral relationships, we shall find Him all the time. We lose faith in God when we are hurt in the physical domain and God does not do what we want; we forget that He is teaching us to rely on His love. Watch some people and you will wonder how a human being can support such anguish; yet instead of being full of misery, they are the opposite; they seem to be held by a power that baffles all human intelligence, to have a spiritual energy we know nothing of—what accounts for it? “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; . . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.” The waters are real, and

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

the fire is real, but Paul claims that the relationship to God holds.

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled.”^{††} When men’s hearts are fainting for fear, does Jesus Christ expect us to be undisturbed? how is it to be done? have we to become callous and indifferent, or so worn out that we have not enough vitality to feel things? Jesus Christ means that the relationship He can bring us into with Himself can hold us undisturbed in the midst of every disturbance there is. If there is anything supernatural, that is! Human pluck cannot stand these things, there is a limit. No human being can stand calamity and anguish without going under or getting into a panic. Panic is a sudden terror, our whole being gets into a flutter and we don’t know where to turn, we can take a forlorn stand, but it barely stills the panic inside. If we are going to be more than conquerors in calamity, it can only be in the marvellous way by which God “ships in” the supernatural and makes it natural.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Mutinies of Persecution

or persecution . . . ?

Immediately we get hold of a particular thing in the spiritual domain we are going to be systematically vexed by those who don't intend us to have it; they are set on gibing it out of us, because if we are right, they are wrong. Mutiny, a rise against authority, comes from persecution. There is any amount of weakness in us all, but deep down there is red-handed rebellion against the authority of Jesus Christ—"I'll be damned before I yield." Don't take a poetical view of things that go beyond science. At bottom, sin is red-handed mutiny that requires to be dealt with by the surgery of God—and He dealt with it on Calvary.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Spectre of Famine

or famine . . . ?

Can a man remain true to the love of God when he is famine-stricken? God does not prevent physical suffering because it is of less moment than what He is after. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28[†]). Famine is a most appalling spectre, it means extreme scarcity. Can I not only believe in the love of God, but be more than conqueror while I am being starved? Either the Apostle Paul is deluded, and Jesus Christ is a deceiver, or some extraordinary thing happens to a man who can hold on to the love of God when the odds are all against His character.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Scare of Poverty

or nakedness . . . ?

The scare of poverty is the most effectual onslaught. If we know that obedience to God means absolute poverty, how many of us would go through with it? The scare of poverty will knock the spiritual backbone out of us unless we have the relationship to God that holds. It is easy to fling away what you have, child's play to sell all[†] you have got and have nothing left, the easiest piece of impulse, nothing heroic in it; the thing that is difficult is to remain detached from what you have so that when it goes you do not notice it. That is only possible by the power of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Cruelty of the Sword

. . . or peril, or sword?

In every one of “these things” logic is shut up. A logic-monger can silence the man who is suffering with his facts, but suppose the man who is suffering has got hold of Reality and the logic-monger finds he is only “slinging” actualities? Did you ever try to justify God in what He allows? God is not justified unless He can work things out on the line Paul brings out, and we only get there by a moral revolution. The one who deals with the logical rational side has the best of the argument just now though not the best of the facts, and one of the biggest humiliations is that you cannot say a word, you must let the chattermagging* go on. You can shut the mouth of the man who has faith in God, but you cannot get away from the fact that he is being kept by God. That is a domain which logic must shut out resolutely until it is realised that logic is an instrument only. A man can go through tribulations which make you hold your breath as you watch him; he goes through things that would knock the wits out of us and make us give way to blasphemy and whimperings. He is not blind or insensitive, yet he goes through in marvellous triumph—what accounts for it? One thing only, the

* chattermagging: jabbering; spouting off; rambling on



fact that behind it all is the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Spiritually, morally, and physically the saint is brought clean through, triumphant, out of the wreck wrought by tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword. Whatever may be the experiences of life, whether terrible and devastating or monotonous, it makes no difference, they are all rendered impotent, because they cannot separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord. "Out of the wreck I rise" every time.

Zeitoun, Egypt Sunday morning service, November 12, 1916*

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* Zeitoun (zay TOON). An area 6 miles NE of Cairo. Site of YMCA camp, Egypt General Mission compound and a large base area for British, Australian and New Zealand troops. Site of the Imperial School of Instruction (1916-1919).

❖

The Conditions of Spiritual Life

Matthew 10:24-42

Religion is a matter of taste, a matter in which a man's religious life and his actual life do not necessarily agree. In spiritual life that could never be; spiritual life means the real life, and it is significant that whenever Jesus talks about discipleship He speaks of it in actual terms.

“It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.” At first sight this looks like an enormous honour: to be “as his Master” is marvellous glory—is it? Look at Jesus as He was when He was here, it was anything but glory. He was easily ignorable, saving to those who knew Him intimately; to the majority of men He was “as a root out of a dry ground.” For thirty years He was obscure, then for three years He went through popularity, scandal, and hatred; He succeeded in gathering a handful of fishermen as disciples, one of whom betrayed Him, one denied Him, and all forsook Him; and He says, “It is enough for you to be like that.” The idea of evangelical success, Church prosperity, civilised manifestation, does not come into it at all. When we fulfil the conditions of spiritual life we become unobtrusively real.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Dear Sorrows of Spiritual Difference (Matthew 10:24-26)

A disciple is not above his Master.[#] (rv)

When we become spiritual there is a change in us that our former companions feel but cannot locate; they intuitively sense that something is different, there is something that does not agree with their natural outlook. It is a most embarrassing difference in the closest relationships of life (see Matthew 10:22-23). Our affinity with Jesus Christ does make a difference, it produces sorrow and misunderstandings, things that cannot be explained. But Jesus says, when misunderstandings arise, “Don’t be afraid, one day it will be understood how it came about.” Meantime we have to lay our account with the sorrows of spiritual difference, but our devotion to Jesus is so intense that no matter what those sorrows are, we are prepared to go through with it.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Defiant Sagacity of Spiritual Discretion (Matthew 10:27-28)

*What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye
in the light.† (rv)*

There are dark nights in the soul; darkness is the time to listen. If we are to be true to the conditions of spiritual life we must speak not what is expedient, we must speak the truth regarding spiritual realities. The Christianity which is not spiritual says we must by no means offend, or do anything that hurts a Christian brother's feelings. Did Jesus ever offend anyone knowingly? He certainly did (see Matthew 12:1-8); but He never put a stumbling block in anyone's way. The sagacity of spiritual discretion does not mean we have to be obstinate and pig-headed, with a ban of finality* about our views, or that we preach what is expedient—"Oh yes, I agree with you, but it is not expedient to say that kind of thing in public." If God has given us the revelation it is not our business to hide our light under a bushel (Matthew 5:15-16). In your sagacity be wise. Don't preach out of natural discretion, but out of spiritual discretion which comes from intimacy with God. The prophet is more powerful than the priest or king, and in our Lord the prophet-element is the great one. Jesus never spoke with the sagacity of a human being, but with the discretion of God.

* ban of finality: the limitation or "curse" of having one's mind made up, unwilling to consider new information

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



Beware of saying what is expedient from your own common-sense standpoint, especially when it comes to the big truths of God.

The Detailed Security of Spiritual Dependence (Matthew 10:28-31)

And be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.† (rv)

“Be not afraid of them which kill the body”†—leave that alone, but beware of being disobedient to your own spiritual stand before God, because that will kill both body and soul, i.e., make you reprobate. Watch if in the tiniest degree you begin to be afraid. “Now what is going to happen to me physically, in matters of money, in my social circumstances, if I do obey Jesus?” Jesus distinctly says, “Pay no attention to that, beware only of being destroyed both physically and spiritually by disobedience.” Whenever we get out of touch with spiritual reality our body instantly suffers. The source of physical strength in spiritual life is different from what it is in natural life. In natural life we draw our strength direct from without; in spiritual life we draw our physical strength, consciously or unconsciously, from communion with God. When that is broken, physical health begins to be destroyed. Jesus says, Your Father, who looks after the sparrows, will care for you,† fear not therefore. It is not to be a life of self-interest at all. When God calls us He never gives security; He gives us a

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

knowledge of Himself. We reveal how much we believe in the things Jesus said when we reason like this—“Is this God’s will for me? No, it can’t be because there is no security.” “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.” Jesus never had any home of His own, never a pillow on which to lay His head[†]. His poverty was a deliberate choice. We may have to face destitution in order to maintain our spiritual connection with Jesus, and we can only do that if we love Him supremely. Every now and again there is the “last bridge”—“I have gone far enough, I can’t go any further.” If you are going on with God it is impossible to secure your interests at all. We have to go on in perfect confidence that our Father in heaven knows all about us. Are we prepared to fulfil these conditions when they arise?

The Dreaded Stand of Spiritual Destiny (Matthew 10:32-33)

*Every one therefore who shall confess
Me before men . . . † (rv)*

When I am born from above (rv mg) not only is the Holy Spirit in me, but the Son of God is formed in me (Galatians 4:19), and to “confess” Him means that I allow His disposition to have its way through my bodily life. “. . . him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”[†]Will He? or will He have to say, “There is not one detail of your life that has manifested Me. I have had no chance of looking through your eyes, of working through your hands, or loving through your heart”? The true evangelist is

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

the one whose life in every detail overflows with the manifested life of Jesus (cf. Matthew 7:22-23). The world has a right to say, "Produce your goods." In actual circumstances we can prevent Jesus Christ being hurt if we take the blow, but if we stand on our rights the blow goes back on Him. It is not aggressive doing on our part that wins, but the manifestation that it is the Lamb who breaks the seals. If we stand for Jesus Christ we have to take care to nourish His life in us, to bear His Name; then He says He will confess us before His Father who is in heaven.†

The Suffering of Spiritual Discipleship (Matthew 10:34-39)

*I came not to send peace, but a sword.
(v. 34)*

It never cost a disciple anything to follow Jesus; to talk about cost when you are in love with anyone is an insult. The point of suffering is that it costs other people—fathers, mothers, households; consequently we decline to go on, consideration for others causes us to hold back. If we go on with it, then others will suffer. Have we in effect told Jesus we are not prepared for this? "Obedience to Your call would mean I should get into difficulties with my home, my father, my mother, and I cannot possibly be the means of bringing suffering on them." Jesus says, "If you are going to be My disciples, you must be prepared to." God knows what it costs them, and what it costs you to allow it.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Solidarity of Spiritual Discipline (Matthew 10:40-42)

He that receiveth you receiveth Me. . . .†

Solidarity means a consolidation or a oneness of interests. Here, the solidarity is between ourselves and God; we deliberately identify ourselves with God's interests in other people. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least [kjv] of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me" (rv).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

The Sacrament of Saints

I

I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world. John 6:51

Why should I start at the plough of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know He is no idle husbandman, He purposeth a crop.

Samuel Rutherford*

Good corn is not bread; if we are compelled to eat corn we will suffer for it. Corn must be ground and mixed and kneaded and baked, and baked sufficiently, before it is fit to be eaten. When the husk is away and the kernel garnered, we are apt to think that all is done; but the process has only just begun. A granary of corn is not bread; people cannot eat handfuls of corn and be nourished, something must be done to the corn first. Apply that illustration to the life of a sanctified saint. The afflictions after sanctification are not meant to purify us, but to make us broken bread in the hands of our Lord to nourish others. Many Christian workers are like Ephraim, “a

* Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661): Scottish minister, Covenanter.

cake not turned”; they are faddists and cranks, and when they are given out for distribution they produce indigestion instead of giving nourishment.

The Way of the Plough (Matthew 13:18-23)

*Hear ye then the parable of the sower. .
.. (Matthew 13:18 rv)*

It is the plough that prepares the ground for sowing the seed. The hard way through the field is the same soil as the good ground, but it is of no use for growing corn because it has never been ploughed. Apply that to your own soul and to the souls of men. There are lives that are absolutely stupid towards God, they are simply a way for the traffic of their own concerns. We are responsible for the kind of ground we are. No man on earth has any right to be a highroad; every man has the chance of allowing the plough to run through his life. Sorrow or bereavement or conviction of sin, anything that upsets the even, hard way of the life and produces concern, will act as the plough. A man's concern about his eternal welfare witnesses that the plough has begun to go through his self-complacency. The words of our Lord, “Think not that I came to cast [mg] peace on the earth: I came not to cast [mg] peace, but a sword” (rv), are a description of what happens when the Gospel is preached—upset, conviction, concern and confusion.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



The Wildness of the Place (Genesis 3:17-19)

And unto Adam He said, . . . cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. . . . (Genesis 3:17)

That is a description of the place where the plough has to go. It was once a holy place, but now it is desecrated and wild. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 rv). The way through the field which has been battered hard by men’s feet is an illustration of the human heart. The human heart should be the abode of God’s Holy Spirit, but it has been trampled hard by passions until God has no part in it, and the plough has to come into the desecrated place. As workers we must remember this fundamental line. The tendency to-day is to ignore it, to say that men do not need ploughing, they need praising; that the human heart is not bad; that the world is not a wild place. The plough has to come into every place which has been desecrated by the prince of this world, for one purpose—for the seed to be sown.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

The Work of Patience

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Galatians 6:7)

Don't sow the human heart with mingled seed: "thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of [rv] seed" (Leviticus 19:19[†]). God's seed will always bring forth fruit if it is put in the right conditions. Man cannot order the seasons or make the seed to grow (cf. Jeremiah 33:20); and as preachers and teachers we are powerless to make saints. Our duty is to put the seed into the right place and leave the rest to God. It would be foolish for a farmer to sow his seed and tell his servants to watch it; he must sow his seed in the right place and then trust in God and Nature, and by and by he will reap his harvest. So all we can do is to sow the seed of the Word of God in the hearts of the hearers. The words our Lord uttered in reference to Himself are true of every seed that is sown—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." All Christian work, if it is spiritual, must follow that law, because it is the only way God's fruit can be brought forth.

Be endlessly patient. There is nothing more impertinent than our crass infidelity in God. If He does not make us ploughers and sowers and reapers all at once, we lose faith in Him. Modern

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



❖

evangelism makes the mistake of thinking that a worker must plough his field, sow the seed, and reap the harvest in half-an-hour. Our Lord was never in a hurry with the disciples, He kept on sowing the seed and paid no attention to whether they understood Him or not. He spoke the truth of God, and by His own life produced the right atmosphere for it to grow, and then left it alone, because He knew well that the seed had in it all the germinating power of God and would bring forth fruit after its kind once it was put in the right soil. We are never the same after listening to the truth; we may forget it, but we will meet it again. Sow the Word of God, and everyone who listens will get to God. If you sow vows, resolutions, aspirations, emotions, you will reap nothing but exhaustion “. . . and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it” (Leviticus 26:16); but sow the Word of God, and as sure as God is God, it will bring forth fruit. Human sympathy and human emotions and human hypnotism in preaching are the signs of a spiritual hireling and a thief. Sow emotions, and the human heart will not get beyond you. There are men and women at work for God who steal hearts from God, not intentionally, but because they do not preach the Word of God. They say, “I don’t want anyone to think about me”; that should never need to be said. If the thought of ourselves is lurking anywhere as we preach, we are traitors to Jesus Christ. Our duty is to get people through to God. A man may not grasp all that is said, but something in him is intuitively held by it. If you talk truth that is vital to yourself you will never talk over anyone’s head. See that you sow the real seed of the Word of God, and then leave it alone.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

. . . an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. Leviticus 2:2

This Scripture (Leviticus 2), as in fact all Scripture, testifies that service is self-surrender, self-sacrifice. Christ, to satisfy others, was broken; the bread-corn must still be bruised; and the nearer our ministry approaches the measure of His ministry—immeasurably far as we shall ever be behind Him—the more shall we resemble Him, the bruised, the oppressed, the broken One.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Reaping

Corn that has come to fruition must be watched. The enemy of souls, works most havoc in the standing corn. Our Lord told the disciples to pray “the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest”[†] (rv), to cut down the corn, i.e., to disciple men and women. God puts in His sickle by the hand of a disciple and cuts us down where we never thought we would have to be cut down. Every sanctified soul is handed over by God to a disciple to be reaped for Him. What do we say to the people who have come into the experience of sanctification—“Thank God, you are all right now”? That is not discipling them. People come in to reap who have no right to reap. We have to let sanctified souls know that they are there to be cut down, to be reaped, to be made into bread to feed the world. We are apt to shout “Hallelujah” when souls enter into sanctification, but it is then that a time of intense care and anxiety begins until these lives are reaped for God. The need is to watch the standing corn, to watch those who are right with God until they are matured and established. Notice the earnest solicitation Paul had for his converts: “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” (rv). The time after sanctification in every soul under our care is an additional concern to us if we are true servants of God. Times of revival have led the Church to rejoicing instead of watching

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



by earnest prayer until these souls are reaped. Never sympathise with a cut-down soul, but rejoice, and teach them to rejoice.

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? . . . For ye are our glory and our joy.” This is the dividing of the spoil. How many of us are going to hear Jesus Christ say when we stand before Him, “That soul was reaped by you”? Jean MacLean wrote underneath the only photograph she ever had taken, “Spoilt for this world saving as I can win souls to Jesus.” She was an obscure, noble missionary and was used by God in untold numbers of lives, she literally reaped them for God.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

◆

Threshing

The first description John the Baptist gives of Jesus is that of a Divine Husbandman at work in His threshing-floor (see Matthew 3:12). When corn is stored in the granary we are apt to think that that is the end, but it is only the beginning. Sanctification is a reaping, an end, but also a beginning. Standing corn has to be cut down and go through the processes of reaping, threshing, grinding, mixing and baking before it is good for food; and sanctified souls must be told that their only use is to be reaped for God and made into bread for others. It is time we got away from all our shallow thinking about sanctification. The majority who are introduced into an experience of sanctification remain at the gateway—"saved and sanctified"; but they do not know how to go on, consequently they begin to stagnate. We need to learn that God has a lot to do with a saint after sanctification; our perplexities come because this is not realised. We have to see that as right dividers of the word of truth, we bring this before people.

Beware of being guided by mental or spiritual affinities, let God mix you as He sees fit. Peter thought he knew better than God, but God had to mix Peter with the Gentiles before he became good bread (see Acts 10:9-16).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Grinding

Jesus said that in the lives of the saints there will be tribulation, not difficulties, but tribulation. The great cry of modern enterprise is success; Jesus says we cannot be successful in this age. This is the age of the humiliation of the saints, that means we have to stand true to Jesus Christ while the odds are crushingly against Him all the time.

“Tribulation worketh patience.” In the experience of tribulation we are brought to understand what millstones are. Millstones are used to grind the corn to powder, and typify the sacredness of the discipline of life—“No man shall take the mill or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man’s life to pledge” (Deuteronomy 24:6). You have been having a snug time in the granary, then God brings you out and puts you under the millstones, and the first thing that happens is the grinding separation our Lord spoke of—“Blessed are ye when men shall . . . cast out your name as evil for the Son of man’s sake.”[†] The other crowd want to have nothing more to do with you, you are crushed for ever out of any resemblance to them. Very few of us know anything about suffering “*For My sake.*” When God is putting His saints through the experience of the millstones, we are apt to want to interfere. Hands off! No saint dare interfere in the discipline of the suffering of another saint. God brings these things into our lives for the production of the bread that is to feed the world.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



◆

In the East the women sing as they grind the corn between the millstones; and “the sound of the millstones,” is music in the ears of God. The worldling does not think it music, but the saint who is being made into bread knows that his Father knows best, and that He would never allow the suffering if He had not some purpose. Ill-tempered people, hard circumstances, poverty, wilful misunderstandings and estrangements, are all millstones. Had Jesus any of these things in His own life? He had a devil in His company for three years; He lived at home with brothers and sisters who did not believe in Him; He was continually thwarted and misunderstood by the Pharisees, and He says, “the disciple is not above his Master.”[†] If we have the tiniest element of self-pity in us God dare not put us anywhere near the millstones. When these experiences come, remember God has His eyes on every detail.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Baking

There is a spiritual significance in the methods of preparing the meal offering mentioned in the Book of Leviticus (Ch. 2)—the frying pan, seething in pots, or baking in an oven. Why some people suffer is open and clear to everyone; others are placed in a boiling tumult (watch a porridge pot and you will see what this means), and only God knows what is happening. Others again are placed in fierce, silent ovens, no one knows what is going on, but when they are taken out they are precious to God and man alike. God is producing good food for Himself and for His saints. We all have our special functions, never try to do what someone else is doing; let God make you what He wants you to be. He knows your circumstances and He will alter them when He chooses. Be careful of God's honour as a saint.

III

He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom. Matthew 13:37-38 (rv)

Be content, ye are His wheat growing in our Lord's field. And if wheat, ye must go under our Lord's threshing instrument, in His barn-floor, and through His sieve, and through His mill to be bruised, as the Prince of your

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



salvation, Jesus, was (Isaiah 53:10), that ye may be found good bread in your Lord's house.

Samuel Rutherford*

God sows His saints in the most useless places, according to the judgment of the world. Where they will glorify Him is where God puts His saints, and we are no judge at all of where that is. When we become rightly related to God the likelihood of our being of use to men seems in the eyes of the world to be pathetically crippled. People say, "Don't be so absurd as to go and bury yourself there." We have to let God sacrifice us as He likes, and go where He sends us. Never be deluded into making this statement: "I am here because I am so useful"; say rather, "I am here because God wants me here." The one lodestar of the saint is God Himself, not estimated usefulness.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

* Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661): Scottish minister, Covenanter.



❖

Blessed Bread

Sacrificed

And He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. (Matthew 14:19[#] rv; cf. Romans 12:1)

God never uses in His service those who are sentimentally devoted to Him; He uses only those who are holy within in heart and holy without in practice. The Book of Leviticus is full of spiritual teaching, and the significance of all the detail is that a servant of God must keep himself unspotted from the world, sternly and guardedly holy, not for his own sake but for the sake of his calling. No man has any right to break the Word of God and feed the people of God unless he is without blemish spiritually through the Atonement. That standard is being blotted out nowadays. “And no man taketh the honour unto himself”—nearly all do, though. Preaching is worthy in God’s sight when it costs something, when we are really living out what we preach. The truth of God is to be presented in such a way that it produces saints.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Broken Bread

Suffering

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. (Matthew 26:26⁺ rv; cf. 1 Peter 4:19)

Not only does God waste His saints according to the judgments of men, He seems to bruise them most mercilessly. You say, “But it could never be God’s will to bruise me”: if it pleased the Lord to bruise His own Son, why should He not bruise you? To choose suffering is a disease; but to choose God’s will even though it means suffering is to suffer as Jesus did according to the will of God.

In the Bible it is never the idealising of the sufferer that is brought out, but the glorifying of God. God always serves Himself out of the saint’s personal experience of suffering. If suffering is used to idealise the sufferer there is an aftermath of sickly sentimentality—“What I have gone through!” and God is not glorified. In actual life the true sufferers and the affected sufferers are mixed, and the Spirit of God gets His chance only through the one or two who are so completely effaced by means of identification with the Death of Christ that the thought of what they are going through never affects

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

them. The thing that strikes one about such lives is never the sense of restraint but of inspiration, the feeling that there is unfathomably more behind.

If we are self-willed when God tries to break us and will do anything rather than submit, we shall never be of any use to nourish other souls; we shall only be centres of craving self-pity, discrediting the character of God. Jesus called self-pity Satanic (see Matthew 16:22-23). No one understands a saint but the saint who is nearest the Saviour, and if we accept sympathy from any others, we will end in being traitors to Jesus Christ, because the reflex thought is, "Well, God is dealing hardly with me." The people we have to knit to our souls are not those who sympathise with us, they hinder, because sympathy if it is from a wrong source always enervates, but those who bring us into a fuller realisation of the purpose of God.

Jesus Christ represents the Bread of God broken to feed the world, and the saints are to be broken bread in His hands to satisfy Jesus Christ and His saints. When by the sanctifying power of the grace of God we have been made into bread, our lives are to be offered first of all to Jesus Christ. "Give Me to drink." In the Old Testament the first fruits were always offered to God, and that is the symbol for our lives. The saint is meant to satisfy the heart of Jesus first, and then be used to feed His saints. ". . . and ye shall be My witnesses"—a perfect delight to Me wherever I place you. The saints who satisfy the heart of Jesus make other saints strong and mature for God. The one characteristic of the life is, "In all

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES



the world there is none but Thee, my God, there is none but Thee.”

The consummation of self-sacrifice is that just as our Lord was made broken bread and poured-out wine for us, so He can make us broken bread and poured-out wine for others; but He cannot do it if there is anything in us that would make us give way to self-pity when He begins to break us. The one mainspring of the life is to be personal, passionate devotion to Jesus Christ.

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES

❖

Beatified Bread

Sovereignty

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. . . . (Romans 8:18 rv; cf. Ephesians 2:6)

The saints who satisfy the heart of Jesus are the imperial people of God for ever, nothing deflects them, they are super-conquerors, and in the future they will be side by side with Jesus. “He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father, in His throne” (Revelation 3:21 rv). The glorified Lord will take up His abode with the saint who puts God first in reality, not in sentiment. “We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.” The Triune God abiding with the saint! Jesus Christ is made heavenly bread to us now, and there is a glorious day coming—and is even now in the experience of many of His people—when the nourishment of the life is the same for the saint as for his Lord. “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

THINK AGAIN

PERSONAL STUDY NOTES