

**General Topics :: Oswald Chambers - The Highest Good Pt 1****Oswald Chambers - The Highest Good Pt 1 - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/1/12 15:48**

This a branch of another thread on Pharisaism.

Oswald Chambers spoke of Base Impulse and said that "the base impulse revealed itself in the time of Our Lord in three great types of sin - the sin of the Publicans, the sin of the Pharisees and the sin of the Sadducees. This is what he had to say about Publicans and Pharisees... the Sadducees will follow.

THE BASE IMPULSE

But, ah, through all men some base impulse runs,
The brute the father, and the men the sons,
Which if one harshly sets himself to subdue,
With fiercer indolence it boils anew,
He ends the worst who with best hopes began,
How hard is this, how like the lot of man!

Experimentally the meaning of life is to attain the excellency of a broken heart, for that alone entails repentance and acceptance, the two great poles of Bible revelation. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" - why, we do not know, but God has made it so. The one thing we are after is to avoid getting broken-hearted.

The base impulse revealed itself in the time of our Lord in three great types of sin-the sin of the publicans, the sin of the Pharisees and the sin of the Sadducees.

"In every country there is a lost class, a class that has given way to the sins of the flesh till its sin can no longer be concealed. What others do by stealth, they do openly. Such a class existed in our Lord's day in Palestine, and the popular names for them in that day were publicans and sinners, or publicans and harlots, or the lost sheep of the house of Israel... The attitude of Jesus to this class was one of the most singular and characteristic features of His career, and, when fully understood, reveals more clearly perhaps than any other circumstance the secret of His mission." (Stalker,)

It is remarkable how little Jesus directed His speech against carnal and public sins, though He showed plenty of prophetic indignation against the sins of a wholly different class. He preached His grandest sermon to a bad, ignorant woman (John iv. 10-14), and one of His most prominent disciples was a publican named Matthew. The one man He ever said He wanted to stay with was another publican called Zaccheus, and some of the most fathomless things He said were in connection with a notoriously bad woman (Luke vii. 36-50). It is along this line that we can understand why the Pharisees were sick to the heart and disgusted with Jesus Christ, why they called Him "a friend of publicans and sinners!" We would have done exactly the same to-day in spite of all our religious sentiments. We gloss over our Lord's actions with our civilized conceptions and destroy the meaning of His Gospel.

Our Lord's conduct was not due to any insensibility to the wickedness of open and carnal sins, nor that He was lenient to those sins: He drew near to those sins to make them for ever impossible in the lives of those guilty of them. Jesus roused the conscience of the very worst of them by presenting the highest good. We are apt to forget that our Lord's parables in Luke xv. say just what they do. Never take the fifteenth chapter of Luke as an exposition of the Gospel first; it is our Lord's apologia; He is explaining to the Pharisees why He is here.

(1) THE PHARISAIC INVINCIBILITY.

In interpreting our Lord's teaching, watch carefully who He is talking to; the parable of the prodigal son was a stinging lash to the Pharisees. We need to be reminded of the presentation of Jesus in the New Testament for the Being pictured to us nowadays would not perturb anybody; but He aroused His whole nation to rage. Read the records of His ministry and see how much blazing indignation there is in it. For thirty years Jesus did nothing, then for three years He stormed every time He went down to Jerusalem. Josephus says He tore through the Temple courts like a madman. We hear nothing about that Jesus Christ to-day. The meek and mild Being pictured to-day makes us lose altogether the meaning of the Cross. We have to find out why Jesus was beside Himself with rage and indignation at the Pharisees and not with those given over to carnal sins. Which state of society is going to stand a ripping and tearing Being like Jesus Christ Who drags to the ground the highest respected pillars of its civilized society, and shows that their respectability and religiosity is built

on a much more abominable pride than the harlot's or the publican's? The latter are disgusting and coarse, but these men have the very pride of the devil in their hearts.

Ask yourself, then, what is it that awakens indignation in your heart? Is it the same kind of thing that awakened indignation in Jesus Christ? The thing that awakens indignation in us is the thing that upsets our present state of comfort and society. The thing that made Jesus Christ blaze was pride that defied God and prevented Him from having His right with human hearts. Sin is the independence of human nature which God created turning against God. Holiness is this same independence turning against sin. Sin is not doing wrong things, it is wrong being. Sins are wrong acts: sin is an independence that will not bow its neck to God, that defies God and all He presents, that will not go to the excellency of a broken heart. It is that class who stand for independence in art and culture; it is not for them a question of right or wrong, but of pleasing the senses. The greatest pillars of art and culture are erected on these lines and Jesus Christ pulls down the whole temple, because we cannot build temples of art on this earth at all; they will be built in heaven when the foundations are pure.. The refinements of art and culture are all in opposition to the tumbling-in crisis of God in the Incarnation.

(2) THE PRIDE OF INTEGRITY.

The conspicuous point of view in which the Pharisees always figure in the Gospels is as incapable of repentance. Self-knowledge is the first condition of repentance. Watch Jesus Christ whenever there is the tiniest sign of repentance, He is the incarnation of forgiving and forgetting, and He says that is God's nature. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Remember, that kind of statement hits the Pharisees to the very core of their being. Could they listen patiently to a Man like that? Jesus was killed for His words, He would not have been crucified if He had kept quiet. It was the ruthless way He went straight to the very root of Pharisaism that enraged them until they became the devil incarnate and crucified the Son of God. 'Calvary' means 'the place of a skull,' and that is where our Lord is always crucified, in the culture and intellect of men who will not have self-knowledge given by the light of Jesus Christ.

...more to come.

Re: Oswald Chambers - The Highest Good Pt 2 - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/1/12 16:21

(3) SENSIBLE RATIONALISM.

The Sadducee is the type of person who in all ages destroys the treasure of the spirit; he is a commonsense individual. "There are some people to whom it is never safe to show any valued possession... Now and then someone with the bump of destruction will push his way into our holy of holies, and deface what he considers our idols and leave us sad... Unfold a scheme, a dream, a theory, a long-cherished recollection within the reach of a man who loves destruction, and he will reduce it to nothing. Even a book, that treasure which stands half-way between the tangible and the intangible, is not safe with him, he will turn its pages into ridicule, and give it back with half its charm destroyed."

Thomas Carlyle utterly destroyed the early faith of his wife and never gave her anything in its stead, and Mrs. Carlyle's letters, gifted with the most amazing literary ability and mentality, are wilted and sad, like her face, because he destroyed in the true spirit of the Sadducee her holy of holies and gave her nothing in its place. This line of thought makes us understand our Lord's attitude to the Sadducees, and why He said, 'Don't cast your pearls before swine.' There are some things we must never show to anyone. Like children, we all think that we ought to show our cherished possessions, we ought not; there are Sadducees everywhere. You rarely find them people of uncouth speech, but rather the opposite.

We have all met people who act like an east wind, our mental horizon gets lower and we feel unmitigatedly mean and despicable. When Jesus Christ came near men, He convicted them of sin, but He convicted them also of this, that they could be like He was if they would only come to Him.

"The Sadducees were the anti Pharisaic party, and they went as far in believing too little as the Pharisees in the direction of believing too much. They were the skeptical religious party. Their beliefs lacked warmth and conviction. The weakness of the religious sentiment in them was partly the cause and partly the effect of another characteristic, viz. worldliness. The spiritual and eternal stirred them but faintly, consequently they had a more tenacious hold on the concerns of this present life." (Stalker.)

Watch the difference between the faces marred by sin and those marred by coming in contact with the Sadducees, who have all their inner shrines destroyed and nothing given in their place; the latter have a look of withered, mean sanity. Sin does not produce it, it is the effect of the presence of this monster - the rational, healthy-minded Sadducee; this 'monster' has been inside the Christian Church for the past twenty centuries, and is one of the problems that has to be faced. T

here are comparatively few Pharisees to-day, the greater number are Sadducees, who back up their little bits of common sense against all that Jesus Christ said and against everything anyone says who has had a vision of things differing from common sense.

(4) SENSIBLE RULING.

"The Sadducees were the ruling class and the priestly party from the date of the Babylonian exile. Such priests have continually emerged in the affairs of God, and they are much more interested in the affairs of the visible world and but faintly tinged with the spirit of the world invisible." Stalker

This is the type that perfectly exhibits the Sadducee of Lord's day. It is not the brutal skeptic who is the Sadducee, he does not destroy anybody's shrines, it is the woman with particularly bright conceptions of their own, but who are far more concerned with the visible success of this world than with anything else. You go to them with some insurgent doubt in your mind, and they smile at you, and say, 'Oh, don't exercise your mind on those things, it is absurd.' That is the Sadducee who has done more to deface in modern life what Jesus Christ began to do than all the blackguardism and drunkenness in our modern civilization. The subtle destruction of all that stands for the invisible is what is represented by the Sadducee.

It is necessary to get the historical atmosphere and setting of our Lord's life in order to understand the historical exegesis of His teaching. Most of us only know the spiritual exegesis, we come with our spiritual illumination and take incidents out of the Bible-'I don't care about their historic exegesis, I simply take them as expressing my own spiritual condition.' That is not the thing for a student to do; a student has to rightly divide the word of truth, and to find out the historic background of Jesus Christ's teaching.

In Luke xvi. 19-31 we get a good picture of Our Lord's attitude to the Sadducees. The rich man "lived to dine and to wear sumptuous clothing, neither bestowing on the poor any generosity commensurate with his means nor remembering that he was an heir of eternity, and herein is the great moral principle, viz. that of not doing being as guilty as doing, and that the Judge will accept no excuse for a life not marked by unselfishness up to the means of its opportunity." (Stalker.)

If we know that we have received the unmerited favour of God and we do not give unmerited favour to other people, we are damned in that degree. The best and most spiritual people today turn Jesus Christ's teaching out of court. They say He could never have meant what He said, and, we have to use common sense. If we apply common sense we run the risk of being Sadducees. What common sense person would carry out the Sermon on the Mount? It is the Sadducee who withers up the true spirit of devotion to God in our life by a 'squirt' of common sense, because the common sense comes from a background of infidelity against God's rule. We are measured by what we do according to what we have. Some people only give to the deserving, because they imagine they deserve all they have. Our Lord says, Give, not because they deserve it, but because I tell you to.

"Jesus reveals in the parable of the rich man (Luke xii. 16-21) that his mind and heart have been entirely absorbed with property. About his soul and eternity he has manifested no concern, he heaped up treasure but was not rich towards God." (Stalker.)

Treasure in heaven is the wealth of character that has been earned by standing true to the faith of Jesus, not to the faith in Jesus. Our Lord's advice to the rich young ruler was, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." That is, have faith for the things Jesus Christ stood for, and anybody who is fool enough to conduct his life with Jesus Christ as absolute Master will realize what Jesus said, "Men shall separate you from their company. . . and cast out your name as evil." Many of us are saved by the skin of our teeth, we are comfortably settled for heaven, that is all we care for, now we can make a pile on earth. There are plenty of people who give their testimony all right in meetings, but they are Sadducees to the backbone.

"The cynicism of the official who feared not God nor regarded man, administered justice in our Lord's instance from mere annoyance. For him justice had no majesty and the misfortune of the widow had no sacredness. That which he could not be got to do, either for the fear of God or out of regard to man, he yet hastened to do merely to save himself from an annoyance; and this is a thoroughly Sadducean trait." (Stalker.) (See Luke xviii. 1-8.)

The spirit of 'I do not wish to be annoyed' is frequently the inspiration of the administration of justice in private cases. It works into our intercession also: I want that bad person saved-because he is of so much value in the sight of God? No, because he is an annoyance to me, I cannot live my life properly with him. That spirit cannot live anywhere near Jesus Christ, because Jesus had only one point of view-His Father's will.

In any work I do for God is my motive loyalty to Jesus, or do I have to stop and wonder where He comes in? If I work for

God because I know it brings me the good opinion of those whose good opinion I wish to have, I am a Sadducee. The one great thing is to maintain a spiritual life which is absolutely true to Jesus Christ and to the faith of Jesus Christ.

Re: - posted by Clutch (), on: 2004/1/12 17:31

Ron,
Thank you for sharing your copy of Oswald Chambers with us. I was looking for mine after you suggested it on another thread, but I may have lent it out to some poor widow, or orphan. :-D
Seriously, please keep it coming, great stuff! ;-)
With a little less sincerity on my part, I confess that I've told some folks that you are an unusual character. A great theologian, with "common sense". I apologize, repent, and please forgive me for characterizing you as an oxymoron. :-D
Clutch :-P

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/1/12 18:35

oxymoron?
isn't an oxymoron a grammatical term for an apparent contradictory statement eg "police intelligence"?:-D
Just joking, officer :-D :-D

Re: - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2004/1/12 19:02

Yes, thank you, Philologos. I love to read anything by "Oz"- as my 14 year old daughter now calls him. (She reads a teen version of "My Utmost".

I have to say that he is my favorite of all writers! Other than the Lord, he has been my guide and conscience this past few years.

My kids got me "The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers" for my birthday. I haven't hardly made a dent in it. It came with a cdrom that has an interview with his only child, Kathleen. Can't wait to watch it.

I always welcome anything by him. :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/1/13 3:58

hi moreofHim
I have been reading Ozzie, as my wife calls him, for over 40 years and he still has the power to stir, shock and challenge.

I also have the complete works +CDRom and some years ago we had tea with Kathleen Chambers. She was neighbour to a Christian friend. She was as 'bright as a button'. She had no real recollection of her father but, of course, knew her mother (and through her, the father).

She was uncomfortable with the commercialisation of Oswald Chambers that she saw taking place. I think that was because she could see a lot of money being made and knew that that was not at all what her mother would have wanted. She also had some objections to bits of the autobiography. Before she died she passed some of her father's lecture notes on to her neighbour and there is a possibility that they may be published at some point.

If you know of anyone who uses a Palm Pilot I have a free version of a Palm My Utmost that I could let them have.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/1/13 9:22

Ooops. moved this to another thread.

Re: The Highest Good Pt 3 - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/1/13 9:27

THE BASE IMPULSE
CONTINUED

Lord, Lord, when we are dead, remember not
All our lost sorrows and our soul's endeavour,
Better to bear the burden of our lot,
Firmer to stand how strong the storm so-ever,
Only remember all the agony
Thou bearest in the Garden silently.

And when the soul by death is freed again,
Thou wilt not let the rapture of her wings
Be marred by memory of this life's pain,
But lift our hearts above our sufferings.
Lord, let our soul's life after all these years
Rise stronger, wiser, cleaner for its tears.

(1) THE LOW MAN WITH A LITTLE THING TO DO.

The base impulse is the way sin works into our minds and gives us a totally wrong view of God. If the base impulse does not show itself in flesh and blood sins, it will show itself in mean-mindedness. Try and imagine what Jesus meant when He said, "Preach the gospel to every creature"; He keeps 'an open house' for the whole universe. It is a conception impossible of human comprehension.

(a) Moral Distinctions. We are interested in other men's lives because of a career, a profession, or an ideal we have for them, but God does not seem to care an atom for careers or professions, He comes down with ruthless disregard of all gifts and geniuses and sweeps them on one side; He is interested only in one thing, and that thing was exhibited in the life of our Lord, viz. a balanced holiness before God. Our Lord's character is the full-orbed expression of God's ideal of a man. We can never take any one virtue and say Jesus Christ was the representative of that virtue; we cannot speak of Jesus Christ being a holy Man or a great Man or a good Man; Jesus Christ cannot be summed up in terms of natural virtues, but only in terms of the supernatural. If we can describe a man by any one virtue, he ceases to be God's idea of a man, and the characteristic of the Spirit of God in us is that He brings us "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

(b) Money Matters and the Master's Mind. "Money is the sign and symbol of all earthly possessions; it is earthly Pleasure in a solid condition, only requiring to be melted to assume any of its more volatile and usable forms; and the pursuit of it easily becomes an absorbing passion even with those who have forgotten how to turn it into these equivalents. On this subject the language of Jesus is astonishingly severe." (Stalker.)

Jesus saw in money a much more formidable enemy of the Kingdom of God than we are apt to recognize it to be. Money is one of the touchstones of reality. People say, 'We must lay up for a rainy day.' We must, if we do not know God. How many of us are willing to go the length of Jesus Christ's teaching? Ask yourself: how does the advocacy of insurance agree with the Sermon on the Mount, and you will soon see how un-Christian we are in spite of all our Christian jargon. The more we try, to reconcile modern principles of economy with the teachings of Jesus, the more we shall have to disregard Jesus. Whenever we read anything that is very plain in our Lord's words, we either say that we cannot understand it or that it has another meaning. Common sense is the best gift we have, but it must be under the dominant rule of God. We enthrone common sense, we do not enthrone God. Men must reason according to their god, and the god of to-day is common sense; that is why Jesus Christ's teaching is ruled out of court. If we try and apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to ordinary business life to-day, we shall see where we are. Civilization was founded by a murderer, and the very soul and genius of civilization is competition. What we are trying to do to-day is to Christianize civilization, and our social problems exist because Jesus Christ's teaching is being ruled out.

Re: The Highest Good Pt 4 - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/1/13 9:28

(2) THE HIGH MAN WITH A GREAT THING TO DO.

"Profound as is His sense of the wickedness of the world and the lostness of the individual, the ground-tone of His preaching is not despair, but hope; and the final and enduring impression left on the mind by the prolonged and sympathetic study of all His words is, that there is an essence of divine dignity and immeasurable value, which it is the task of the Saviour and of all who are inspired with His aims to rescue from the dangers to which it is exposed and to redeem to a destiny of blessedness and immortality," (Stalker.)

(a) Solidarity of Sin. Solidarity means oneness of interest. We are familiar with the phrase 'the solidarity of the human race,' but there is also a solidarity of sin (a oneness of interest in sin), and a solidarity of salvation (a oneness of interest in salvation). I mean by sin, not sin in a particular sense, but in the great big general sense which means a violation or neglect of the laws of morality or religion, and God's Book shows that there is a oneness of interest in all sin. The Psalms show a wonderful discrimination about sin (e.g. Psalms xxxii, li.); they refer to the same thing the Apostle Paul refers to in Ephesians vi. 12, the supernatural inspiration of sin.

We have considered the three great sins of our Lord's day - the sin of the publican, of the Pharisee, and of the Sadducee, and now we must look to the fact; that our Lord considered men as evil. "If ye then being evil..." (Luke xi. 13). Jesus Christ is made to teach the opposite of this by modern teachers; they make out that He taught the goodness of human nature. Jesus Christ revealed that men were evil, and that. He came that He might plant in them the very nature that was in Himself. He cannot, however, begin to do this until a man recognizes himself as Jesus sees him.

We start with the idea that some people are good and some bad; but we are all bad, everyone of us needs saving by Jesus Christ. Imagine that being believed to-day! We can hear Christendom saying, 'Nonsense, human nature is not evil.' The feature of today is the love of man that hates God. We are alienated from the standpoint of Jesus, we have become incarnated by a leaven that never came from His point of view, and if we are going to stand for Him we shall find that what He said is true: "They will turn you out of the synagogues" - not because we denounce sin, a socialist denounces sin as much as a preacher of the Gospel. The difference between a Christian worker and one who does not know Jesus Christ is just this that a Christian worker can never meet anyone of whom he can despair. If we do despair of anyone, it is because we have never met Jesus Christ ourselves. The social worker who does not know what Jesus Christ came to do will end in absolute despair before long, because the social worker more than anyone else begins to see the enormous havoc that sin has made of human nature, and if he does not know the Saviour from sin, all his efforts will meet with as much success as attempting to empty the Atlantic Ocean with a thimble.

(b) Saviour from Sin. The great challenge in personal work is - What relationship have I to Jesus Christ? It is not simply that we realize the power of Jesus to save, but that we recognize the possibilities for evil in our own heart, discerned in us by the Holy Spirit, and know that Jesus can save unto the uttermost. Let a man be a murderer, or an evildoer, or any of the things Jesus said men could be, it can never shake our confidence if we have once been face to face with Jesus Christ for ourselves. It is impossible to discourage us because we start from a knowledge of Who Jesus Christ is in our own life. When we see evil and wrong exhibited in other lives, instead of awakening a sickening despair, it awakens a joyful confidence - I know a Saviour who can save even that one. One worker like that is of priceless worth, because through that one life the Son of God is being manifested.

It is not only necessary to have an experience of God's grace, we must have a body of beliefs alive with the Spirit of Jesus, then when we have learned to see men as He sees them, there is no form of disease or anguish or devilishness that can belch up in human life that can disturb our confidence in Him; if it does disturb us, it is because we don't know Him.

The sense of sin is in inverse ratio to its presence, that is, the higher up and the deeper down we are saved, the more poignantly terrible is our conviction of sin. The holiest person is not the one who is not conscious of sin, but the one who is most conscious of what sin is. The one who talked most about sin was our Lord Jesus Christ. We are apt to run off with the idea that a man in order to be saved from sin must have lived a vile life himself; but the One who has an understanding of the awful horror of sin is the spotlessly holy Christ, Who "knew no sin." The lower down we get into the experience of sin, the less conviction of sin we have. When we are regenerated and lifted into the light, we begin to know what sin means. There is no mention of sin in the Apostle Paul's apprehension by Christ, yet no one wrote more about sin than the Apostle Paul years after in his Epistles, because by the marvelous working of God's grace and his own repentance, he was lifted into the heavenly places where he saw what sin really was. The danger with those of us who have experienced God's perfect salvation is that we talk blatant jargon about an experience instead of banking on the tremendous revelation of God the Holy Ghost. The purer we are through God's sovereign grace, the more terribly poignant is our sense of sin. It is perilous to say, 'I have nothing to do with sin now'; you are the only kind of person who can know what sin is. Men living in sin don't know anything about it. Sin destroys the capacity of knowing what sin is. It is when we have been delive

red from sin that we begin to realize by the pure light of the Holy Ghost what sin is. We shall find over and over again that God will send us shuddering to our knees every time we realize what sin is, and instead of it increasing hardness in us towards the men and women who are living in sin, the Spirit of God will use it as a means of bringing us to the dust before Him in vicarious intercession that God will save them as He has saved us. Beware of the metallic, hard, un-Christlike stamp of some testimonies to sanctification; they are not stamped by the Holy Ghost. The testimony to sanctification that is of God is dipped and saturated in the blood of the Son of God, and that blood sprang from the broken heart of God on account of sin. When once the soul realizes what sanctification is, it is a joy unspeakable, but it is a joy in which there is the tremendous undercurrent of a chastening humiliation. Beware of any experience that is not built absolutely on the atoning merit of Jesus Christ; and remember, the measure of your freedom from sin is the measure of your sense of what sin is.

Re: - posted by Clutch (), on: 2004/1/13 13:05

Hi Ron,

This Ozzie obviously ain't the one I've heard about on TV!

"Beware of any experience that is not built absolutely on the atoning merit of Jesus Christ; and remember, the measure of your freedom from sin is the measure of your sense of what sin is."

I believe Revival is coming. This web site is one evidence of that belief. Revival will begin individually with recognition of sin, repentance, and forgiveness. Eph. 4:30-32. Great word my YOUTHFUL friend! :-D

Clutch :-P

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thanks, Dad. :-P