

# YMCA Spiritual Legacy Series

## Oswald Chambers – Chaplain and Author of *My Utmost for His Highest*



### Oswald Chambers

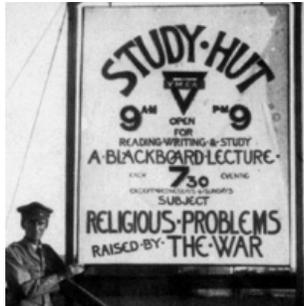
#### The Surrendered Life

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

Oswald Chambers was but an open opportunity to glorify God.

He was born on July 24, 1874 in Aberdeen Scotland, where he became a Christian during his teen years under the ministry of Charles Spurgeon. God used many things to shape and mold Chambers. One of which was his acceptance into the University of Edinburgh. Rapid spiritual development followed as Chambers became intently interested in the things of God. After answering God's call into the ministry, he studied theology at Dunoon College.

From 1906-10, he conducted itinerant Bible-teaching ministries in the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan. Upon his return home, he married Gertrude Hobbs. In 1911, he founded and was named principal of the Bible Training College in Clapham, London. The school closed in 1915 due to World War I. Chambers was then



Oswald Chambers, YMCA Chaplain, in front of his YMCA Hut, Zeitoun, Egypt, 1916 © Oswald Chambers Publications Association.

commissioned by YMCA to go to Zeitoun, Egypt, where he ministered to Australian and New Zealand troops.

Many of Chambers' devotional lectures make up a large portion of *My Utmost For His Highest*, now considered a classic and his best-known book. His death, the result of a ruptured appendix in 1917, came as a shock to all who knew him. He had

often told friends: "I feel I shall be buried for a time, hidden away in obscurity; then suddenly I shall flame out, do my work, and be gone."

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

#### Through Trial God Brightens the Flame

However, there was a time when answering God's call seemed difficult and painful. For several years, poverty and spiritual loneliness clouded his life. Then came the breakthrough. God had used a wilderness experience to "bring him to the end of himself." He became keenly aware of his utter worthlessness. He found his only worth to be that which God had given him in Christ.

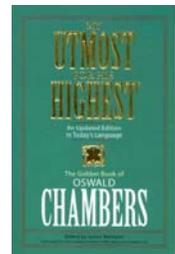
There arose within Oswald Chambers' life a deep desire to abandon all for Christ's sake. He writes, "A sanctified soul may be an artist, or a musician [anyone]; but he is not a sanctified artist or musician: he is one who expresses the message of God through a particular medium. As long as the artist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

Sooner or later God makes each of us aware of the areas in our lives where "self interest" abides. These are the areas He comes to touch and demand complete surrender.

#### Living The Surrendered Life

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

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



Out of this death comes life and the opportunity to live a Spirit-filled existence. (John 12:24) As we respond in obedience to God, He promises to lead and guide us through life with a sense of victory and hope. The times of trial, distress, and isolation are times God accomplishes His greatest work, when He molds us into the likeness of Christ.

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

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

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

Rev. Tom Welch  
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