

Dr. Baxter's Testimony

by J. Sidlow Baxter

Dr. Baxter shares his personal testimony of faith, emphasizing the importance of listening to wisdom, the impact of his mother's faith, and the joy of knowing Jesus as Savior.

Duration: 38:24

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 2:8, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal anecdotes and reflections on the impact of Jesus in his life. He recalls his mother's faith and the influence of evangelists in his town. The speaker expresses empathy for the audience, acknowledging the potential weariness of listening to many sermons. He emphasizes the importance of finding one's purpose in Jesus and encourages young men to consider a calling to the ministry. The sermon concludes with a reminder to seek God's guidance and stay in His will.

Transcript

Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen, I'm really feeling deeply sorry for you, and even sorrier for my poor, wretched self. I've been in the ministry half a century, but I've never had a throat like this before. And I can't blame it on Three Hills.

It started about 10 or 12 days ago, with a dry spot somewhere down in the Red Channel, and it seemed to reach its naughty peak when I got here. Now, it must be painful for you to listen, but I'm going to make you a promise. I will not preach one minute longer than two hours.

No, and if I find it's giving out, you can hear how bad it is, can't you? If I find it won't hold out, I think instead of speaking, I'll play for you. Well, for that I won't. However, we'll see.

You're not hearing me as my voice normally is, so don't think too badly. Then, there's another reason why I'm feeling rather sorry for you. I can remember when I was 16, that's 2,000 years ago, I can remember when I was 16, sitting in a crowd not quite as big as this, and a white-haired gentleman came to address us, 67 years old.

And I can remember sitting there and thinking, Oh, what does a white-haired fogey like that have to say to me, age 16? But, you know, nature has a wonderful way of turning the tables on you. Now, you're the Sid Lord Baxter, 16, and I'm the silvery-haired old fogey, and you're sitting there and you're saying, what does

a wizened old creature like that have to say? However, I have one advantage over you, that you don't have over me. Are you listening? You see, I have been just where you are, but you've never been where I am.

I know what it feels like to be 13, 15, 17, 19, but you don't know what it feels like to be 93. No, I'm not 93. I don't think I'll tell you how young I am.

I will tell you this, fellows. You see, all my years I've been in sports, I used to have a soccer team of my own. Wow.

And you know, to this day, I can't see a ball without running after it. Anyway, I feel like saying to you, now, if you want to learn a little bit of real wisdom, even if you won't listen to your old dad and mom, please listen to me. I'm not going to preach to you.

I'll give you another reason why I'm sorry for you. I'm sorry that you have to hear so many preachers and have to sit and listen to so many sermons. I think if I were in your place, I'd get really fed up at times.

But never forget, there's another side to it. If you think we're overdoing it, no, we're not. There's always some young fellow or some young woman gets something from some address that passes the others by.

I don't mind telling you that that white-haired old wiseacre that I inwardly made fun of, he turned out to be one of the biggest blessings to me. He said some things that have meant more to me all through the years than I would ever have dreamed. And I thought instead of sort of preaching to you, I didn't say preaching at you.

You know, I was converted when I was 16. And when I started preaching, when I was 17, about four months later, I started preaching when I was 17, and I've been preaching ever since. When I started, my mother gave me different pieces of advice.

Now, my mother was a preacher. Oh, she was. She really was.

Mr. Chairman, she was blessed, you know, with one of those voices. Near to, it was nice and soft. But in a big hall, it had a kind, it was a wonderful voice.

It used to ring round. And at home, she was the most impressive private lecturer I ever encountered. And, you know, she said to me, Sid, in your preaching, never do this.

And don't keep saying, you, you, you. Say, we and our. I've never forgotten it.

You know, even when I pronounce the benediction, may the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, I never say, be with you all. I always say, be with us all. Don't you think that was a very motherly touch.

Another, another, another thing she said to me was, Sid, don't preach at people. Preach as though you were sitting there. Talk to yourself.

Be one with, oh, they were wise words. Well, I thought this afternoon I wouldn't preach at you or even to you. I thought I'd like to give my, my, my testimony.

Would you mind? Nor would I. And I'll tell you how it all began with me. You see, in our house, after I was three years old, we had no daddy. And, oh, I loved my mother.

If ever a little lad loved his mother, I did. And we were Methodists, and I was always with my mother. And one night when I was in, when I was five years old, there was an evangelistic campaign in our Methodist church.

And the services were in the sanctuary on a Sunday, but during the week they were in the lecture hall, seating about 400 people. I think we got it pretty well filled. Well, one night the preacher preached, and then he said, those who have come under conviction for sin and feel their need of a Savior, will they please come along the aisle and out at this door to the corridor and go into one of the anterooms? Well, I'd come under conviction for sin, and I stood up, went to the end of the form, walked along the aisle and went through the door, and I went into the first classroom.

And who should be there but a neighbor of ours, Mrs. Dunkerley. That was her name. She lived at the other end of the row, the row in which we lived.

And I'll never forget what Mrs. Dunkerley said. Remember, I was only five. She said, Oh, Siddy.

They all used to call me Siddy then. Oh, Siddy, I'm glad you've come in. You know, we've been praying for you for a long time.

And you know, Mr. Chairman, for a little boy five to hear a grown person talk like that, I thought, well, well, they really must have some concern for me. And the text that she used to bring me to the Savior was Revelation chapter 3, verse 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in. And in my boyish way, as Mrs. Dunkerley and I knelt down, I opened my heart and took Jesus to be my Savior. And then I went back into the room, the main room, the lecture hall.

The meeting proper was over. But in those days, Mr. Chairman, I think it's a very, a very lovely thing. They always used to have, they used to let those who had to go home go home, and the other people who wanted to stay could stay.

And they used to sing a hymn or a chorus, and then they would have testimonies. And different people got up and gave testimony as to what the Lord had done for them. And when a convenient pause came, I stood up.

And in my little five-year-old voice, I said, Well, my dear friends, I'm so glad to tell you that tonight such a big burden has rolled from my heart. My sins have all been forgiven, and I'm saved. Now there were sitting on the platform just in front two maiden ladies.

Do you know what maiden ladies are? They are those who haven't got married. And you know those two maiden ladies never did get married. And I'm thankful to heaven they never did, because I would have been sorry for their husbands.

But I keep reminding you I was only five. I heard one say to the other, How ridiculous, a bit of a child talking like that. And suddenly my cheeks went red, and my brain went all mixed up, and I was confused, and I became suddenly dumb.

And I just sat down and nestled near to my mother. And I can remember she put her arm around me, and I just wept. Mr. Chairman, I never wanted Jesus after that.

I never wanted your blessed religion. I thought it was all a grown-up pretense. And from that night, from the damage that that woman did, I never wanted your religion.

And I grew up, I was never a, I was never a bad boy. God in his mercy kept me from all of the grosser sins, blessed be his name. But apart from that, I was a thorough worldly.

I wanted a good time. I enjoyed sport. My passion was the piano.

I started my little career as a pianist, you know. But I didn't want religion. I boxed, and I wrestled, and I tennised, and I gamed, and I flirted.

You know what flirting? But I didn't want Jesus anymore, except for one thing. It was in my dear mother, who never preached to me. She knew what was going on.

But it was in my dear mother I first saw what Jesus can be to a human heart. Now we were in very poor circumstances. I can remember twice my mother starting the week with one penny.

Now I was, let me see, I would be four years old on one of those occasions, and about six on the other. And my mother didn't know that her little son was watching, but I was. And on both occasions, I saw my mother put the penny on the table.

She thought I was playing with my toys, but I saw her put the penny on the table, and kneel down, and just ask God to send some money. And on both occasions, when my mother got up from the table, just excuse me a minute, my nose is saying, well I'll be blowed. Do you use that expression here, well I'll be blowed? On both occasions, when my mother had finished praying, she got up singing that little chorus.

I can't sing it to you like this, but it goes like this. A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right. A little, do you know the chorus? Let me play it for you.

Well you see, I feel better now, because when you're preaching, it's always good to have a few notes, isn't it? Now, now we'll come back. I was saying it was in my mother, I first saw what Jesus can mean to a human heart. Well, when I was 16, there came to our town two evangelists named the Brothers Wood.

Mr. Arthur Wood was the song leader, and Mr. Frederick Wood was the preacher. Little did I dream that I was going to get converted, and a couple of years afterwards that I would travel all over Britain as their pianist in the National Young Life Campaign. But these two men came to our little town of Ashton-under-Lyne, six miles from Manchester, in the county of Lancashire, England.

And he announced his subjects in advance, and he announced that on the Friday night his subject would be the infallible detective. That was enough for me. You see, I was very fond of detective stories.

I knew all there was to know about Sherlock Holmes, and Nelson Lee, and Sexton Blake, and, oh, I can... Some depraved fellas here, they know. And when he announced the infallible detective, I thought, I'll be there. And I was there.

And you know what the infallible detective was? Be sure your sin will find you out. That was it. But I'm glad to tell you that that night, it wasn't just the infallible detective's sin that tracked me down and found me out.

The infallible saviour got me, too. And when Mr. Wood invited those who wanted to receive the saviour to go to the, they called it the instruction class, that was the after-meeting, I went. And I was one who put my hand up in that smaller meeting.

And what do you think? The name was Mr. Barham Gold. Do you sing, do you sing this tune here? Do you sing, do you sing this tune here? And the hymn was written by his cousin, Barham Gold. And when I became the pianist, I said, I've got to be as good as Gold.

Anyway, he was the gentleman who dealt with me. And the text, would you believe it, was the one that Mrs. Dunkerley had used when I was five. Revelation chapter 3, verse 20.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will, what? Make him a Baptist? Make him a Methodist? Make him a Protestant? Make him religious? No. Make him happy? No.

Make him sad? No. If any man hear my voice and open the door, just this, I, a living Savior, will come in. If you are here today, forgive me for being so straight and blunt, but if you're here today and you don't know my dear, dear Savior, ooh, let me say this, don't be under any delusion.

We're not trying to make you religious or happy or sad or anything. If you knew what you're missing, if you don't know him, ooh, Jesus isn't a figure of yesterday. I've got him.

I've got him. I've had him with me and within me for over 50 years. I know him better than I know anybody else.

And it's difficult for me to think of people living without him. Anyway, if you're not converted, get this clear. We're not trying to make you religious.

When Jesus makes that promise, he simply says, if you'll open the door, I will come in. Well, Mr. Gold read that text and then he got me to read it with my name in. Behold, I stand at Sid's door and knock.

If Sid hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to Sid. He made me read it like that, so I did. Then he said, well Sid, did Jesus promise to come in? Yes, Mr. Gold.

And you want to receive him as your Savior? Yes, Mr. Gold. Very well, we'll kneel down and you will pray and ask him to come in and I'll listen. Oh no, not likely.

I've never prayed a prayer in my life with anybody listening. Well, but he said you need a witness. Oh no, no.

I'll go and pray at home. No you won't, you rascal. You'll pray here.

So we knelt down and I suppose in my own clumsy little way, I prayed a prayer and I asked Jesus to come in. And then he prayed a prayer and then we rose from our knees and he shook my hands and he said, let me be the first to congratulate you. Sid, has Jesus come in? Oh, I think so.

You think? Read the verse again. So I had to read the verse again. Now he said, Sid, has Jesus come into your heart? Well, I hope.

You hope? Read the verse again. I read it again, then he said, Sid, has Jesus come into your heart? Well, uh, I, uh, I, uh, I what? Read the verse again. So I read it again.

He paused and then he said, now listen, Sid, you know that you're a hell-deserving sinner. You know that Jesus has committed himself to this promise. Do you believe that Jesus really made that promise? Yes, Mr. Gold.

And did you really ask him to come in? Yes. Well, if he promised and you asked him, has he come in? Yes. So he shook my hand.

He said, there, that'll do. Good night. And he left me.

You see, so long as I was thinking and hoping and imagining, he knew I was in boggy ground. But as soon as I said, yes, he promised it, he knew I had my feet on solid rock. And I took Jesus as my savior then.

Are you getting tired now? Nor am I. Oh, but I think I'd better be stopping. All, all I would like to add, dear young fellows and girls, I've never told anybody in public before how old I am, but just in case you're curious to know, I'm not going to tell you today. Let, let me just think carefully.

Yes. Do you know? Oh, since then, since then, life gets better and better with him. You know, when I go back to my hometown and I meet the fellows I boxed with and wrestled with and soccered with, and some of the girls from our school classes and the girls I knew in our town, I'm not in a morbid mind when I say it.

Do you know I'm sorry for them? If you knew the mess some of those fellows and girls have made, all because they've just lived by their own will and their own wisdom, and they've bungled things. You see, when we're young, we do things with a sort of careless abandon, and we don't know what it is to suffer when we're young, but by the time you're 37 and 38 and 40, and you suddenly realize you've made a mess of things and you can't go back and start again, it's about that time of life that you begin to wake up and wish that you'd listened earlier. Oh, you say you sound like me father now.

No, I'm not saying it in that way. I'm leading up to this. You see, my life, because I gave it to the Savior, it's been such a happy life.

I've had trouble, and I hope you'll have trouble. I do. Those people who never have trouble, they're just in the shadows of life when you get married, and I hope you never will get married except for true heart love.

After our conversion to Christ, the most sacredly important thing in life is our love. Never joke about love. If folks want to joke about sex matters and love and wedlock, let them.

They are the idiots. They are. Now, my dear wife, I wish you were here.

You'd only have to give one glance to know why I fell in love with her. My dear Ethel and I, we both, well before we went to school, we used to play together when I was six years old. And then we both went to the same day school, and we both went to the same church.

There was nothing of Hollywood romance about this, you know, love at first sight and divorce on the second sight. And we both got converted in the same evangelistic campaign, and both went to the same follow-up meetings, and both fell in love about the same time. But before I spoke a word about what was in my heart, I prayed about it for nearly a year, and when I spoke to her, she'd been praying about it.

And ever since then, when we've looked into each other's eyes and known how we loved each other, and on top of that we've known that Jesus brought us together, our married life has been a paradise on earth. And that we've had trouble, I began to say, when you get married and go to the marriage altar, you'll think

you love each other, and I hope you do. But you'll never know how much you love each other till you go through trouble.

And we've had troubles, and it's been then that we've known most deeply how we loved each other. And we've always had one purse, which I have yet to see. But I can't grumble because she's the best economist I ever knew.

She allows me one dollar spending money a week. And on Friday nights I have to account for every cent. And if I can't account for every cent, she thinks I'm wasting my substance in riotous living.

But oh, fellows and girls, you mustn't think you're abnormal if, when you're 17 and 18 and 19 and 20, there's a longing for fellowship with one of the other sect. That's natural. It's beautifully natural.

And if there's one point at which Satan leads young fellows and girls out of the will of God, it's there. He knows that if we love the Savior, he can't trick us by something that's obviously evil. So he comes to us through something that's beautiful.

The important thing, the supremely important thing, is make it a matter of prayer that God will guide you to the girl, or to the boy that he has for you. You'll never regret it. Take a look at me.

You can see I'm not miserable. And I can, now that I'm in my 90s, I can look back and I can see how God has wonderfully guided. Do you know after my conversion, my mother bought me a Bible.

Not this one. It was a Bible, almost this size, with big print. And do you know what she said to me? She said, Sid, I bought you a Bible with big print because you're going to read this book more than any other, and you've got to look after your eyes.

Don't have a Bible with small print. Have a Bible that's easy to read. And do you know what the text was, the motto for my life, that she wrote in it? John chapter 2 verse 8, whatsoever he saith unto thee, do it.

And I've got such an obtuse brain, such a stodgy old mind, that I'd had that in my Bible 10 years before I saw the point of it. It was the mother of Jesus who said to the servants, whatsoever he saith to thee, do it. And it was my mother saying to me, for him.

You got it? Yes. And you know as I look back, I can see now the wonderful plan that God has had for my life. It goes in 325.

25 years leading up to the ministry, 25 years in the settled ministry, and now I'm in the third 25 in this wider ministry. And now I'm praying as to what I'll do with the fourth 25. But you know to look back Mr. Chairman and friends, and see how wonderfully God has guided, it just makes you want to go to everybody and say, oh for your own sake, get into the will of Jesus and keep there.

Well I've finished. Have I kept you too long? Thank you. Oh and what a foghorn this is, isn't it? Dear me.

Well anyway I'm through and thank you for listening so courteously and so patiently and so sympathetically. My last word is this. You know I think some of you young men, I'll come to the girls in a minute, I think some of you young men, as I look into your faces, some of you young fellows are meant to be in the ministry.

It's the greatest of all callings. There's only one thing I can think better. Of course it is the ministry too.

I always wanted to be an overseas missionary. So did my Ethel. We wanted to go to Africa.

But God didn't call us there. I don't know why. I'm not the missionary type.

I'm not, I can't rough it like missionaries in some places. Oh but in some places they have a very easy time these days, don't they? I mean so far as domestic things are in in places like India. Anyway the Lord never called us there.

But young fellows, when you get towards the end of your year's honor, you'll know how true this is. It's the greatest business in the world to be in the service of the King full-time and winning souls to him. Oh nothing like it.

And you girls, I say it is like a father's talk, this isn't it? Look how thrilled they all look. Well I don't think I'll try and give advice to the girls. Some of you I know you'll land out there on the mission field.

Others of you will be here in the home country. Dear girls, take my word to heart about the young man who may have to come into your life. Make sure that you keep in the will of Jesus.

You'll never, never, never, never regret it. Never let a young man take advantage of you. I'll tell you this, you see we're a mixed audience and you're young people and I must be careful to speak with proper propriety.

If the two of you are living in the will and in the love of God, that keeps everything else in the married life sweet all the way through. But apart from that, oh there are such unhappy tragedies as you know. And you know when once that tragedy has happened, if there's been divorce or anything like that, there's something gone out of life that can never come back.

And what I'm saying is meant to anticipate possibilities of that kind. Make sure that you keep in his dear perfect will and you'll never, never, never be sorry. Are there some of you here today, and if you're told the truth, you're a bit skeptical of us preachers.

You wonder whether we're as real as we seem on the platform. Are there some of you here today and you're not really converted? Don't you think that it's time you understood this? We're not preaching religion. We're offering you this dear, dear, dear, dear Savior.

And he's knocking at your heart now. And if you'll ask him to come in, he'll come in. And when you've got him, the Savior, you've got it, salvation.

That's the beginning. Amen. Shall we bow in prayer?

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