

# Five Difficulties of the Christian Life

by J. Sidlow Baxter

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*J. Sidlow Baxter explores the five major difficulties faced by Christians and highlights the comforting role of the Holy Spirit in overcoming them.*

**Duration:** 1:00:12

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by assuring the audience that despite having five texts, the sermon will not be excessively long. The sermon focuses on the Holy Spirit and its role in convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The preacher emphasizes the importance of evangelistic sermons being concise and to the point, while allowing more time for deeper discussions with Christian believers. The sermon concludes with a story about a Scottish lassie encountering dragoons on her way to a Covenanters' gathering, illustrating the need for courage and faith in the face of opposition.

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## Transcript

My dear friends, I hope my voice will not be too unpleasant for you to listen to. Confessedly, yes, I am in real difficulties. To put it as euphoniously as possible, the mucous membranes of my laryngeal organs are not functioning felicitously.

And my throat feels like a red lane full of cinders and gravel. Have you ever had that experience? I hope you have, so that you can sympathize enough. It isn't hurting me at all, and if it just gives out, well, the chairman will take over.

And I can't grumble, friends, because since my precious wife and I commenced our now 18 years of unbroken travel and preaching, I've never had, in any part of the world, I've never had a cold, never had a sore throat before, and in all the 7,000 engagements, I've never missed a meeting. So I'm, as we say in bonnie Scotland, I'm nay grumbling. It's just that it may be a little bit unpleasant for you to listen to.

And I have a shock for you right at the beginning. The message that I want to bring to you this morning is based upon no less than five texts. So perhaps I had better put your trusting minds in a state of composure by assuring you that my having five texts is not in the least wise indicative that my peroration will be five times the appropriate duration.

No, it simply means that I'm bringing to you this morning a five-fold New Testament study, a study which I am persuaded can be of simply incalculable profit to all of us if we have ears to hear and hearts to receive. So, now for my five texts. Have you brought your Bible? All right, text number one is in the Gospel according to John, chapter 14.

John, chapter 14, and verse 16. Our Savior says, And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever. My second text is in that same chapter, verse 26.

There's more in the verse than that, but I call a special attention to that. He shall teach you. And now text number three is in John 15, verses 26 and 27, right at the end of chapter 15.

Our Master says, But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me, and ye also shall bear witness. Same word in the Greek. He shall testify of me, and ye also shall testify, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

And now text number four is in John, chapter 16, verses 7 and 8. Jesus says, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. Fancy our Lord Jesus ever needing to prefix a guarantee of truthfulness to anything that he said. He who is the eternal truth become incarnate.

But of course the disciples were so disturbed, and nonplussed, and downcast by his apprising them that soon he must be leaving them, that our Lord felt obliged to pacify and strengthen their minds. So he says, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you.

But if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, that is to you, when he is come, he will reprove you. Oh no, he doesn't say he will reprove you.

When he is come, that is to you, he will by implication through you convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Now dear fellow believers, before I turn you to my fifth and final text, let me at this point insert three explanatory comments about the preceding four. Comment number one.

All of us will have perceived that these four texts are closely associated by reason of the fact that they each treat of the same subject. That mysterious, wonderful, infinite, divine being whom we call the Holy Spirit. Comment number two.

These four verses are the more closely interlocked inasmuch as they each refer to the Holy Spirit by that peculiarly beautiful designation the Comforter. And comment number three, though possibly this may be superfluous for some of you, I think some of you are doing Greek, aren't you? Keep on with it, you'll never regret doing Greek. Well, comment number three.

Our English word Comforter in these four texts represents the compound Greek word parakletos. The prepositional prefix para means alongside of, just as it does in our well-known English word parallel. And kletos, the body of the word, comes from the Greek verb kleo, transliterated into English k-l-e-o, which means I call.

And the combined meaning of parakletos, which we now Englishize into paraklete, is one who is called alongside. To be my heidekong, my strengthener, my standby, my advisor and sympathizer and guardian and guide, and a great deal more. It is one of the most eloquent terms in the whole Greek vocabulary, the

paraklete.

And blessed be his dear name, he is mine. And if you are a blood-washed born-again Christian believer, this heaven-sent wonderful paraklete is yours. And now for my fifth and final text.

It does not come in the according to John. Nonetheless, it does flow to us from the pen of that same apostle. It comes in the first epistle of John, to which kindly turn.

The first epistle of John and the second chapter. Wait a minute, friends. Is it trying to you to listen to this foghorn of mine this morning? Oh you're surviving, are you? All right, there's worse to come, so.

I told you. Now the first epistle of John, chapter 2 and verse 1. Have you got it? My little children, says the now aged apostle, conscious alike of his spiritual and natural seniority. My little children, these things I am writing unto you, that ye do not sin, that is, that ye do not knowingly, much less willingly, and least of all willfully, or continually, sin.

These things I write unto you, that ye do not sin. But, now here's the dread contingency. But, if any man sin, notice he doesn't say of any saint, or of any Christian sin, this is a delicate diplomatic reminder that even the saintliest among the sanctified are still very human.

If any man sin, well what? Does that immediately disrupt the believer's union with God's dear son? Thank God, no. There is a prior anticipation of it, and a wonderful provision against it. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

And the latent link between that verse, and the four which we have already consulted, is in that word, advocate. Because in the Greek, it is that meaningful word, paraklete, again. If any man sin, we have a paraklete with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Well now, dear fellow travelers to the heavenly Zion, those are my five basal texts. And now, with blending prayerfulness and eagerness, let me begin to build upon them the superstructure of my message to you this morning. We Christian believers are the only people on this earth who have found the secret of true joy.

We are. We never make that claim with stupid bravado, or mere enthusiastic superficiality. We are in dead earnestness when we humbly make the claim, we are the only people who have found the secret of true joy.

We don't deny for a minute that the God-forgetting worldling has a certain kind of happiness, a happiness of the flesh, as he plunges into his godless and sometimes voluptuous round of carnal pleasures. Oh, there's a certain kind of happiness in it all, and we don't begrudge the worldling his happiness. But do I need to say to anybody here this morning, there's a world of difference between mere happiness and true joy.

Happiness, as the etymology of the word indicates, is purely circumstantial. When happenings happen to happen happily, you have a happiness, and when happenings happen to happen unhappily, you have unhappiness. But happiness is neither more nor less than happen-ness.

It is purely circumstantial, whereas in magnificent contradistinction, real joy is altogether independent of exteriorities. Joy is a deep, wonderful well of satisfaction down in the soul of its possessor. Now we

Christians haven't just found happiness, in fact some of us, in terms of the flesh and the earthly circumstances, have a pretty rough time of it.

But we found joy, and we can sing that dear old Sankey stanza, I found a joy in sorrow, a secret balm for pain, a beautiful tomorrow of sunshine after rain, I found a branch of healing near every bitter spring, and a gracious promise stealing over every broken string. My dear brother, my dear sister, isn't that the joy we have found in Jesus? I found the joy no tongue can tell, how its waves of glory roll, it is like a deep, o'erflowing well, springing up within the soul. Oh friends, please look happy.

Please look as though you've got that joy. Some of you look indescribably grim. Is it my voice after all? Yes, we found the true joy.

Ah, but wait, as in all such cases, there are two sides to the coin. And if we Christians have found the elixir of true joy, it is also true that we are up against problems and difficulties about which unconverted people know nothing. The way of salvation, by which I mean the eternal salvation of the soul from the damnation of Gehenna on the other side of the grave, the salvation of the soul is free and easy and immediately receivable.

Simply because at utterly immeasurable cost to himself, God has made it so. The way of salvation is easy. And if there should be one unconverted man or woman, youth or girl here this morning, oh let me peel out that tender bell from the belfry of the gospel.

I say the way of salvation for your soul is easy. Listen, he that believeth on the Son of God shall never perish, but hath everlasting life. Oh, ten thousand hallelujahs for that.

But if the way of salvation is easy, the living of the Christian life is hard. It isn't a picnic. It's a fight.

It's a holy war against the world and the flesh and the devil. I've never found the Christian life easy, have you? Mind you, it's grand. I wouldn't be out of this fight for anything.

But the Christian life isn't easy. Now, I have a persuasion in my mind that if sometime when you're in a pensive mood, you sit down and deliberately encounter those difficulties that we are all up against as Christian believers, I have an idea that you like me will find they all seem to resolve themselves into five comprehensive categories. They all associate under five headings.

And the remarkable thing is that those five big difficulties that we are all up against as Christians, they are anticipated and wonderfully matched by these five paraplete passages. Don't you think that begins to sound interesting? Well, I know what somebody's saying. Come on, Mr. Preacher, hurry up, tell us what the five difficulties are and how the... No, I shan't hurry up.

Well, I have learned this. Maybe some of you preachers have found it too. When I'm preaching an evangelistic sermon, I never like to go, I seldom if ever go beyond 30 minutes.

I think many an evangelistic sermon fails because of its longevity. In preaching the gospel, get at it, speak quickly, get the case over, and then press for an immediate verdict. But when you're talking to Christian believers about the deeper things of the word, the faster you speak, the less gets in.

So I will not hurry. I'll have you out in good time. What would you say is the first big difficulty that we are all up against as Christian believers? When I say it, some of you will say, mm-hmm.

Eh, but I don't think I would have put that first. And you'll no sooner have said that before you'll say, ah, but on second thought that's it. Well it sounds strange.

It is the difficulty of our unwantedness. Yes. Let me explain, if explaining is needed.

We Christian believers are in the aggregate a great company of millions and millions spread around the five continents of the globe. But in any one given area, we are always a minority. And we have the problems of the minority.

And those problems are acuter than the problems of other minorities, because they are spiritual problems that this spiritually dead world doesn't understand. You see, the fact is, most of us find we are respected as persons, but resented as Christians. Yes, we are respected as persons.

They want us as neighbors, because we are clean, and we are tidy, and we are friendly, and we are peaceable, and we are constructively helpful to our neighbors. Oh, they want us as neighbors, and they want us as employees, because we are punctual. We are men and women of integrity.

We don't work for our wages with our eye on the clock. We are upright and conscientious. Yes, they respect us as persons, and they want us as employees.

They want us as business associates. They can trust us when they are absent. They know that we are honest, that we don't steal, that we don't lie.

Yes, they respect us as persons, but they don't, uh, they don't want us as friends. They resent us as Christians. Now that brings upon us the problem of loneliness.

That was my first big social problem after my own conversion, when I was 16. Somehow it was like autumn, when the leaves fall from the trees. All my pals of both sexes somehow fell away.

And on Saturday nights, I'd sit there with my Bible like a pelican in the wilderness, or a partridge on the mountains. And, uh, more than once, I found myself asking, Sid, is this what it's meant to be? Is this the Christian life? Now, uh, loneliness can be a weary, worrying, wearing experience. Have you ever noticed a way back in Genesis, before ever the ugly shadow of man's first sin fell across the pristine loveliness of that primal paradise, there was an earlier shadow? We read, and God beheld all that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

But scarcely have you read that before you find this. And God said, it is not good. Oh, so already there's a shadow.

And what was the shadow? You don't need me to tell you. It is not good for the man to be alone. The first shadow that ever flitted across a human pathway was the shadow of loneliness.

And do I need to remind you, the Apostle Paul tells us that that first Adam was a tupos, or type, of our dear Savior as the second Adam, the new representative of the race. And in this immortal Gospel of John, from which four of our texts are taken, I find Jesus, the second Adam, saying, I am alone. Of course, he could always go on to add, as indeed he did, yet not alone, the Father is with me.

But let me remind you, there came an agonizing finale on Golgotha, when amid that midday darkness, from that pinion sufferer on that Roman cross, there came in quivering syllables this awful requiem, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Oh, Jesus knew what it was to be betrayed by a Judas, and denied by a

Peter, and deserted by the Twelve, and disbelieved on by his family, and repudiated by his townspeople, and rejected by his countrymen, and crucified by the world, and even forsaken of the Father. There never has been a loneliness such as Jesus plunged into inwardly, as he hung on that awful, awful cross. And why did our adorable Master endure the nameless dread of that infinite loneliness on the cross? He has told us why.

It is so that his blood-purchased people should never be lonely again. And he has said, when I get back to heaven, this is the first thing I'll do. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another paraclete.

Now in the Greek, there are two words for another. One is the Greek word heteros. We get our word heterodox from it.

It means another of a different kind. That's not the word that Jesus uses. He uses a word that means another of similar or identical nature.

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another paraclete who's so like me, and so one with me, that in having him, you will have me. Not circumscribed and limited in a physical body, but I'll come to be not only with you, but by the paraclete, I'll come to be within you. Another paraclete that he may be with you and within you forever.

Unlike myself, who now corporeally and visibly must withdraw from you, he will be within you day after day, all through the years, right on to the end, this other wonderful paraclete. I don't want to use exaggerative wording, but when this wonderful truth of the heaven-sent, ever abiding, indwelling, never departing paraclete, first flashed upon my youthful mind about two years after my conversion, it was almost like an addendum conversion. And from then until now, I've never been lonely.

I've often been alone. And I wonder if some of you will grasp the grim meaning of this. I've sometimes been most alone in a certain kind of minister's meeting.

The holy brethren can freeze you, if you'll let them. Oh, I've had to stand alone for my evangelical faith in the Bible. I know what it is to stand up for the Bible and to be booed down in the denominational assembly.

And I've also found you can be far more alone in a city and its crowds than in the Sahara Desert or the Sin Desert of India. Haven't you found the same? But I bear my loving and grateful testimony this morning, all through these 50 years, I've never had a lonely moment. There are always the two of us, he and I, always with me and better still within me.

I want to challenge you, dear Christian, are you making the most of this wonderful paraclete? Do you talk to him from morning till night? Do you listen to him from morning till night? And if sleep forsakes your troubled eyelids, as it did mine at three o'clock this morning, and you can't sleep, amid the curtains of the nocturnal darkness, do you talk to him then? Do you listen to him then? You see the Holy Spirit, oh I'm sure I need, is this too simple? Never mind. The Holy Spirit is just as personal as the Father and the Son. He is co-equally divine as the Father and the Son.

Eternally uncreated, eternally uncreated, the wonderful Holy Spirit. And keep listening, the Holy Spirit loves you and me just as much as Jesus loves us, and just as much as the Heavenly Father loves us. And even at the risk of your thinking my theology is somewhat peculiar, the Holy Spirit not only loves you, he likes you.

He does, I can easily prove it. How do you show whether you like people or dislike them? Why the people whom you like, and for whom you have a fond affinity, you seek the pleasure of their company whenever you can have it. But people for whom you have a natural aversion, you avoid their company as often as you courteously can.

Now the Holy Spirit comes to be with you and within you from January 1st to December 31st, from first thing on Sunday morning to the last thing on Saturday night. With every new day your first waking thought, he's there until you put your head on the pillow at night to go to sleep. And he knows us through and through and through.

He never misunderstands, he's the absolute psychologist and the inerrant psychiatrist. And when our nearest and dearest friends and relatives are misunderstanding and blaming us because they can only see the outward, he never misunderstands, he's within us, he sees us interiorly, he knows the first and the last, the outward and the inward, the best and the worst, and he keeps loving us and living with us and sharing with us and living within us and comforting us. Oh friends this is a wonderful provision isn't it? Just let me have a cough.

We're getting through. All right that's that. What would you say is the second big difficulty we are all up against as Christian believers? I almost feel like saying the clock, but that isn't the point.

First of all, unwantedness. And the second thing I put down is, fancy saying this at TBI, it is the difficulty of our unlearnedness. I didn't say your, I said our.

This is something that we are all in together, the problem of our unlearnedness. Now let's always keep this gratefully in mind that from apostolic times and sub-apostolic times, right on through the centuries to the present time, there have always been outstanding scholars, men of science and of profound erudition, who have been enthusiastic Christian believers. And as it was in the beginning, so it is today.

Some of the finest scholars on earth in our 20th century, and some of the greatest scientists in the scientific field, they are avowed and enthusiastic evangelical believers. Thank God for that. But of course in the very nature of the case, they must be the minority.

And most of us here this morning, probably all of us, belong to the comparatively underprivileged majority, intellectually speaking. And one of our dire problems is this problem of unlearnedness. I see a wonderful admixture this morning of younger and older and middle-aged, and I wouldn't be surprised if among each category, age-wise, there are those who are saying, oh well now you're touching my problem, Mr. Preacher.

You see, I've never been to seminary. I've never done Greek, much less have I grappled with Hebrew. I never even did Latin, and I only had a smattering of French.

And the only English I speak is the North American. You see, I've never gone through great, compendious volumes of religious evidences and Christian apologetics. I've never waded through copious tomes of systematic divinity.

I don't even know my Bible, as I should. What can I do? I want to serve my royal master, but I think back again and again, thwarted and dismayed by lack of intellectual apparatus. Well, friends, I'm thinking just as cautiously as I'm speaking deliberately when I say, if you have a string of academic degrees stretching from here to Calgary, you are not ready for Christian service unless you know the Pentecostal tuition of

the heavenly paraclete.

On the other hand, even though we may never have the privilege of going to famous institutions of human learning, if we know the supernatural tuition of the Holy Spirit, we are members of the aristocracy of heaven, and God is waiting and longing to use us. I'm still thinking carefully as well as speaking enthusiastically when I add, friends, there is no seminary on earth to be compared with that seminary which is at the pierced feet of the risen Christ, where the student body is a consecrated, loving, praying Christian, where the curriculum is the open Bible, and where the chief tutor is the heavenly paraclete, the Holy Ghost. That's the greatest seminary on earth, and we can all go to it without money and price if we will.

Are you giving the Holy Spirit time? Now, on a finely sensitive point like this, I wouldn't for the world be taken up wrongly. I know how easily a public speaker can be misunderstood, so let me make this, as they say, categorically lucid. Hmm.

When I talk about this teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, I do not mean to suggest, I'm not within a million miles of suggesting, that the Holy Spirit designs to make us Christian believers a kind of society of walking religious encyclopedias, able to answer every question, and silence every critic, and plumb every prophecy, and disentangle every enigma, and solve every problem. No, I don't mean that. But I do mean that if you and I, whoever we are, and how however old or young we may be, if you and I, with daily regularity, will browse in these pages with our minds gladly under the direction of the Holy Spirit, then gradually, but ever more rapidly and cumulatively, the Holy Spirit will give to you and me a comprehensive grasp on biblical revelation.

Also, he will give us a more than merely human insight into the deepest and most precious spiritual truths of the Bible. He will make the Bible come alive. He will make its teachings lucid to the mind, and sanctifying in the heart, and powerful in the character.

And he will give to you and me a proficiency in communicating the truths of the Bible to the unconverted all around us. I mean that, and not one whit less. Maybe this is a point where one illustration might save a multiplicity of further words.

A way back in those grim and yet glorious days of the Scottish Covenanters, early one beautiful sunny summer Sunday morning, a Scottish lassie left her home in a highland village and was wending her way down the winding main street to go out to some sequestered vale among the Scottish hills where the Covenanters had appointed to meet, for the breaking of the sacramental bread, and the partaking of the memorial wine, and the opening up of the covenant scriptures. She hadn't gone far, however, before she heard the sound of horses hooves, and swinging round a bend in the road, there suddenly came to view a party of the dreaded Claverhouse Dragoons, led on by a young officer, who seeing this damsel out at a suspiciously early hour of the Sabbath morning, pulled up his steed and his men, and he said, how now? Whither be ye going at this early hour of the Sabbath morn? Well, what was she to say? What would you have said? If she had said she was going to a meeting of the Covenanters, she would have been hauled to the saddle, carried off to jail, and who knows, probably put to death. On the other hand, if she had lied, or barracked, she would have seared her conscience, and dishonored her master.

Well, I'll tell you what happened. I'm not saying she would have put it in this phraseology, but this is the quintessence of it. There was a swift telegraphic SOS to the paraclete, and in the words of Holy Writ, before she called, he answered, and while she was yet speaking, he heard.

So that that dear girl, with perfect composure, found herself almost involuntarily replying, Oh, sir, I'm on my way to our father's house. Our elder brother died, sir, some long while ago now, but his will and testament is to be read this morning, sir, and I go to hear it read, for I have a vital part in it. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I put it to you, it was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and all in agreement say aye.

Yes. Do I need to remind you, this verse is still in the Bible. These words fell and still fall from the lips of our dear Savior.

It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall say, for it is not just you who speak, but the Spirit of my Father which is in you. I've sometimes said to ministers, that promise was for martyrs rather than pastors. I don't think we ministers have to wait each time till we get to the pulpit and trust the Holy Spirit to give us the inspiration on the spur of the minute.

No, no, no, no, no, no. But I believe that in our study of the Word, and in our meeting of life's exigencies, the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, is meant to be our mouth, our matter, and our wisdom. He shall teach you.

Dear brother, sister, how much do you know about this teaching ministry of the Spirit? Well, I see it's nine and seven-eighths of a minute to eleven. Hmm, we'll just have to gallop through the next. I'm sorry in a way, I've taken too long.

Put it down to my sore throat, it's not working as quickly as normally. Very briefly, because I don't want to have to take this theme up again tomorrow. First of all, unwantedness, and then unlearningness, and then next, I put this down as the third big problem that we are all up against.

The problem of our unfittedness. You know, one of the saddest things I encounter as I move in and out the churches is Christian believers, usually middle-aged people, who come to me and they say, Well, you know, I'm not engaging in Christian service like I once did. You see, I used to have a Sunday school class, but I never saw one boy or girl converted.

I used to give out tracts, I never saw one person won for Christ through any tract that I gave. I used to try and bear witness to the neighbors, but I just had to give up. I don't seem to have the necessary qualification.

My most carefully prepared arguments are just torn to shreds in a minute. Even my most urgent pleadings are made a matter of scorn. And I've come away wringing my hands and saying with the disconsolate prophet Isaiah, Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of Jehovah revealed? And I've just had to face up to it.

I don't have the necessary gift. So I've, I've dropped out. Is there any remedy for that malady? Yes, there is.

Though I'm afraid that many of us can know the remedy for the malady and still choose the malady in preference to the remedy. But here it is at the end of chapter 15 and the third of those paraclete verses. But when the paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, he's called that here because he's coming to bear witness to the truth, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me, and ye also.

Now whether we know it or not, most of us persist in, in inverting the order. We put the ye before the he, instead of leaving the he before the ye. Have you never had an experience like this? You go into your prayer room someday for your time of prayer, and when you've gone through the list of items that you've dotted down in your little prayer book or card, you look up to heaven and say, Dear Master, I will not be in bondage to the clock, but I pray thee that thou wilt impress upon my waiting mind those persons or concerns for whom or for which thou wouldst have me pray.

Sometimes gradually, but if your experience is anything like mine, more often unexpectedly, sometimes very suddenly. The Lord will bring some person or some matter with unmistakable pressure to the mind, and you know at once, Oh yes, I must pray about that. For illustration's sake, we'll say it's some unconverted man, and the group of you have been besieging him for some time, trying to win him for Christ, but the more you've tried, the more apathetic or obstinate he seems to have become, until you've begun to think, Oh, it seems as though even God can't crack that nut, and you wonder what you can do.

But now in your prayer time, that man is suddenly brought forcibly to your mind, and you find yourself saying, Oh yes, I must pray for him, and pray you do. The whole of your being becomes concentrated in one urgent pleading that that dupe of Satan might be set free. And you know sometimes after that kind of praying, there's a certain latitude you feel that virtue has gone out of you.

But always there's the God-given inward pledge that prayer has prevailed, and so it has. Either you or one of the group will meet that man some days afterwards, but now when you carry the water of life in the golden chalice of the gospel, instead of seeing it dash to the ground, you find the Holy Spirit has preceded you and created soul first in the man. And now when you take the life-giving draught, there's the first, and the man stoops down and drinks and lives.

Now you know at the beginning of the Christian era, that's how the great victories of the early church were won. It was the Holy Spirit in control directing the service of the rank and file of Christian believers. And my dear brother, my dear sister, there are few things more sacredly thrilling than this kind of service in which it's the Holy Spirit first and you following.

I mustn't expatiate further. What would you say is the four big difficulty we are all up against? First unwantedness, then unlearnedness, then unfittedness, and now I've put down our unequalness over against the challenge of the present-day world. How are we going to break through the encrusted opposition of this metallic 20th century with its commercialization and its urbanization and its industrialization and its television-ization and all its collectivism? How are we going to break through it for Christ? Well, we've all sorts of quacks in the church, each with a supposed remedy, but this is the one provision our Lord has made right through the age.

It's in the fourth of these paraclete verses, John 16 verse 7 again. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the paraclete will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send him to you, and when he is come to you, he will through you convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Why, Mr. Chairman and friends, when you pause and reflect on it, that's how the whole dramatic story of organized Christianity on this planet began. Christ went up, the spirit came down, and the spirit-anointed Jesus men went out. Think of it.

Twelve men, twelve unlettered men, twelve men without any academic degrees, twelve men without any collegiate learning, twelve men without any monetary resources, twelve men without any social prestige, twelve men without any state backing, twelve men without any of those supposedly necessary accoutrements to any kind of global conquest, and these twelve seemingly unlikely men, they went out to preach the new religion of one who, in the estimate of his own countrymen, was a blaspheming false messiah, and who in the eyes of the world outside the little pale of Judea was a publicly disgraced and executed felon. And these twelve Jesus men and their little band of compeyers, they went out against all the imperial might of Rome, and against all the myriad-minded sophistries of the intellectual Greek, and against all the stiff-necked bigotedness of the old-time Jew. Their task seemed ludicrously impossible, and yet only four decades passed, and there was a hue and a cry rang round, these men that have turned the world upside down, her come hither.

How did they do it? This is how they did it, when he is come to you. Oh, you fellows and girls here this morning, I can sympathetically understand. You're sitting there and you're thinking, well, that sounds magnificent, but it's a long way removed from me.

No, it isn't. This dear, patient, persevering Holy Spirit, he knows your problems at PBI, he knows the studies you have to do, but if you can learn early to put him first, and to become a regular praying disciple, the Holy Spirit will fill you, and you needn't beg, and pray, and claim. No, before any claiming of him, he's, he's claiming you.

Let him get you, and don't get excited, and don't think it's complicated, just let him get you. He never leaves a surrendered vessel empty, and don't think you have to have some volcanic eruption of ecstatic emotion. The Holy Spirit, when he fills us, far more often registers his indwelling and his infilling through the intellect and the reason.

I mustn't say more about that this morning, and I'm over time now. A final word. Have I kept you too long? Say no.

All right. What would you say is the fifth of these big difficulties? Have you got them? These five un's. Unwantedness, unlearnedness, unfittedness, unequalness, and the last one is perhaps the most persistent and discouraging of them all.

It's the problem of our unworthiness. If I may be permitted quickly to tear out a page from my own spiritual history. I was converted when I was 16, and three months later I started preaching.

And I've been preaching ever since. And you know about three years ago, I found a packet of my first sermons. And when I look through them, they were so wise and weird and wonderful.

I had a quiet secret cremation. Feeling very glad that the eyes of the world had not seen them. But God was gracious and he blessed my ministry.

We had souls saved, and saints, men and women old enough to be my parents, they very kindly testified of blessing. And suddenly I changed. And when people came and invited me to preach, I politely declined, not telling them why, but knowing inwardly very well.

I began to feel such a hypocrite. I don't mean a purpose, a purposing hypocrite. No, I felt so helplessly unworthy to represent such a Savior, I felt I couldn't represent him in public.

And then I learned a secret. And it was this. Forgive the colloquialism, I'm sure that our Lord Jesus will forgive it.

I learned this secret. If you and I are head over heels in love with him, and if we're truly washed in the blood of God's Lamb and born of the Holy Spirit, even our unworthiness does not preclude us from serving the King. Listen to the fifth of these parable verses.

First Epistle of John. My little children, these things I am writing to you that ye do not sin. But if any man sin, well now there's my unworthiness in its darkest, deepest, blackest, ugliest guise.

Sin. And now over against that this. If any man sin, we have a paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the resurrected.

No. Jesus Christ the ascended. No.

Jesus Christ the glorified. No. Do you see with what preciseness John selects his contrastive adjective here? If any man sin, we have a paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And over against all my dark disqualification and default is his perfect, meritorious, substitutionary righteousness on my behalf. And the heavenly Father sees me in his beloved son. And in the words of Ephesians chapter 1 verse 7, I become accepted in the beloved.

Oh please say hallelujah there. Yes. Well we're through.

Oh Mr. Chairman, what can I say? I'm here in utter confusion, wishing I could go on another hour. God bless you and may all this, this, this precious truth may become more and more precious and more and more real to us as we travel onward to the heavenly Zion. Thank you.

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