

# That I May Know Him

by J. Sidlow Baxter

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing Jesus intimately and personally, and experiencing His power and fellowship in our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:07:31

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:4, Mark 10:45, Luke 9:23, John 14:6, Philipians 3:10, Hebrews 9:3

**Topics:** "Knowing God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of getting to know Jesus through the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He describes these gospels as the most important and extraordinary documents under the sun, as they allow us to understand Jesus as the Son of God incarnate. The speaker encourages younger people to immerse themselves in these gospels, as the Holy Spirit can make Jesus come alive in their minds. He also warns against relying on supposed likenesses of Jesus, as there are no authentic images of him in existence.

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## Transcript

Mr. Chairman, and brethren of the platform, and students of Prairie Bible Institute, and visiting friends, one and all. First, of course, I must express a very warm-hearted thank you for such a magnanimously kind welcome. And in reply, let me assure you, I count myself peculiarly honored and privileged to be here and to have you in my clutches for just a little while.

My father had a deep, rich, resounding, bass voice. At any rate, that is how my dear mother euphemistically appraised it as his dutiful wife. My own less sympathetic but more realistic description of his voice would be that it was wonderfully like the foghorn on an ocean liner determined to out-sound all possible rivals.

One of my father's favorite songs, which he used to revel in singing, was that famous old song, The Village Blacksmith. Did you ever hear that, dear young ignoramuses? And doubtless, my father loved to sing that song in particular because it gave ample scope for his vocal cord to operate at their deafening loudest. Now, that famous old song, which of course you have never heard, has three verses, and the last of the three verses finishes with these words, Something attempted, something done, has earned a night's repose.

Now you can see why I'm referring to it, can't you? On this auspicious afternoon, we are gratefully celebrating something attempted, something done. Of course, I'm thinking especially, I'm thinking especially of the seniors who are here with us today and who will next, Lord's Day afternoon, be formally graduating. But we are thinking also of the other students who have plowed their furrow through another year.

This is an afternoon when we are thinking of something accomplished, something done, and something that has earned far more than a night's repose. Indeed, I rather suspect that while the examination season was on, some of you now and then gallantly or desperately missed a night's repose. Or else you went to bed so late and so tired with excessive study that the only way you managed to get up the next morning was by exercising a new kind of Christian science, the triumph of mind over mattress.

Anyway, thank heaven, all that is over for the time being. And here today, we're rejoicing in something attempted, something done, has earned more than a night's repose. Well now, I'm sure that I'm gathering up the reactions of all your many friends when, as the speaker today, I bring to you their and my own congratulations on past endeavor and on present accomplishment.

And I'm expressing what hundreds of hearts feel when I say, and we couple with all that our prayerful good wishes to all of you for all of the adventurous future. God bless you, and may all your loveliest dreams and sincerest prayers have wonderful fulfillment. But of course I can't leave you there with congratulations merely.

I want to bring you a message, and possibly to offer you a lifetime motto. And of course that takes me right away at once to the book on which Prairie Bible Institute is squarely founded, the Bible. And I'm turning back to the passage that was read to us a few minutes ago by our chairman, Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, becoming conformed unto his death. And of course that first little phrase, that I may know, at once arrests us. Man is an inveterately curious and inquiring being.

Go back to the beginning of any university on this North American continent. How did it begin? Why was it founded? In every case it was because of this inveterate human quest, that I may know. What is the explanation behind the astronomer's telescope? Behind the chemist's crucible and balances? Behind the biologist's microscope? Behind every form of scientific inquiry? It is the indomitable passion ineradicably planted within our human constitution, the passion to know.

Well of course all knowledge is useful. And many kinds of knowledge are interesting. And other kinds of knowledge are exceedingly important.

But the highest, let us never forget this, the highest form of knowledge is not philosophical or even mathematical. It is spiritual. That kind of knowledge changes character.

And the greatest goal of knowing is always that of character enrichment and ennoblement. Now here we are, a crowd of rejoicing Christian believers. And of course I'm saying what all of you know, just as much as I myself do.

That the greatest knowing of all is the one that's in this text. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. Beloved fellow believers and friends, that was the

over-mastering passion of the grand apostle.

And don't you think that you and I should be in the apostolic succession in this matter? If that was Paul's dominating ambition, should it not be yours and mine? Now I'm thinking carefully as well as speaking enthusiastically when I say that compared with this, compared, compared with this, no other kind of knowledge is worth speaking about. It isn't, it isn't, it isn't. This is the greatest passion of all, that I may know Him.

Now let me tell you, Mr. Chairman and friends, why this is very much upon my mind just now. Do you know I have a disturbing apprehensiveness that when at last you and I meet our dear Lord, whether at the other side of the valley of the shadow or amid the spectacular splendor of His second advent, I have a disturbing suspicion that when we first see Him and meet Him, we shall not know Him. Now don't misunderstand.

Of course we shall all immediately recognize Him. How could it be otherwise when we see Him with the sevenfold diadem of eternal deity upon His kingly brow, when we see that outflashing glory compared with which the brilliance of the cherubim and the seraphim is as the dark dusk. Of course we shall instantaneously recognize Him.

The fairest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely, the indescribably, unimaginably glorious Son of God and God the Son. Yes, we shall all instantaneously recognize Him. But do I need to say to anybody here, there is a world of difference between merely recognizing a person and closely knowing that person.

If by some strange fortuitousness of circumstance I should see the present president of the United States of America in Three Hills tomorrow, it is rather unlikely of course, but if by some fortuitously unpredictable circumstance I should see Mr. Richard Nixon in Three Hills tomorrow, I should immediately recognize him, for I have now seen him so often in photographs and on the television, I would know him anywhere. But do you think I would hasten to him and slap those broad political shoulders of his and say, Hi Dick! I would never dream of committing such an unpardonable atrocity of violated etiquette. That was rather well put, wasn't it? You get the point, don't you? Recognition is one thing.

Knowing a person closely is a very different thing. And in his dear name, I want to ask you, dear Christian brother, sister, older, younger, do you really know Jesus? Now do you? You're trusting him for salvation from judgment and the damnation of Gehenna. You're trusting him for eternal rescue from the second death.

You're trusting him for heaven. You're trusting him for your eternal salvation. You sing about him.

You talk about him. And from time to time you pray to him. I'm asking, do you really know him as your bosom companion by a close, sacredly intimate and reverently familiar friendship? Do you know him like that? Do you know, I think if a shadow could fall across the luminous regions of the heavenly paradise, it would be that you and I at last should meet him and look into those wonderful eyes and then have to bend our head and say, Dear Savior King, I was so busy serving you on earth, I never took time to get to know you.

I'm awfully sorry. Would you like to meet him like that? You see, dear fellow believer, when you and I at last meet our adorable heavenly bridegroom, it is meant to be that at long last we are seeing face to face one whom for years we have known heart to heart. Well now, it's with thoughts of that kind struggling in

my mind that I find myself lingering again over this verse here, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.

And of course the first thought that leaps to my mind is that these delightfully passionate words are not the outgush of a mere religious novice or new convert. When Paul wrote these immortal lines, he had been in living fellowship with the risen Savior for over 30 years. I'm glad to find that after 30 years and more, this is still the overpowering ambition of his being, that I may know him.

But didn't he know him? Yes, he did. No, he didn't. Columbus discovered America.

Yes, he did. No, he didn't. We're still discovering America.

Now 30 odd years ago, Paul had met and had been confronted by the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. And ever since then, Paul had been living in communion with this glorious Savior of his. But after 30 years, he was realizing that he had only taken the first few steps in this inimitable continent of Christ.

Why, when you pause and think of it, our heaven of heavens in the heaven to which we're going is to be the never-ending exploration of this endless, infinite, inexhaustible, glorious Savior of ours. He is as infinite as God. And we're going to be discovering him through the ages.

Excuse me, friends. Hallelujah. Well, I thought somebody ought to say it just there.

Another thing that I can't help observing is that Paul wanted to know Jesus in a kind of three-fold progressiveness. One, he wanted to know him directly because he says that I may know him not just about him, not just the theology that surrounds him, but himself directly, personally, closely, that I may know him. Two, and the power of his resurrection.

So he not only wanted to know him directly, he wanted to know him dynamically. And that phrase here, the power of his resurrection, does not mean it's demonstrative or evidential power. It means it's emancipating power in the apostle's own experience.

He wanted to know a Savior who was sharing his resurrection in the heart of his servant. He wanted to know Jesus as a risen, indwelling, liberating reality, setting him free from all slavery and pettiness and mundanity and all kind of bondage so that he was a free man living in victory. Oh, it's great to know him like that.

But then three, he wanted to know him sympathetically for he says, and the fellowship of his suffering. Well now, there it is. He wanted to know the Lord Jesus, one, directly, two, dynamically, and three, sympathetically.

In the old Hebrew tabernacle, there were those three compartments. One, the outer court, two, the holy place, three, the holy of holies. So is it here that I may know him, that's the outer court, and the power of his resurrection, that's the holy place, and the fellowship of his suffering, that's the holy of holies.

Well, when I started doing a little bit of preaching when I was 17, my dear mother, and my, she was a preacher. And at home, she was the most impressive private lecturer I ever collided with. But when I started preaching, one of the things my mother said was, Sid, always keep in touch with the audience.

It's good you know that. So let me keep in touch. I'm asking you again, do you know Jesus like that? If you don't, don't you wish you did? Now, I wouldn't be surprised if somebody is inwardly saying, but Mr. Preacher, what did Paul mean when he said, and the fellowship of his suffering? I have found not a few persons somewhat perplexed by that word.

I think maybe we ought to encounter it deliberately for a minute or two. Let's get this clear in our thinking. When Paul spoke about knowing the fellowship of our Lord's suffering, he did not have any thought that he could go back in point of time and enter into our Lord's Calvary suffering.

No. Our Lord's sufferings on the cross were then and there. They are no longer here and now.

There was an eternal completeness and finality about them. Our Lord Jesus is no longer on the cross. Our Christ is not the Christ of the crucifix.

He is no longer on the cross, nor is he in that Syrian sepulcher, nor is he a misty figure of the long ago. If Jesus were still on the cross, lingering in the agony of crucifixion, then his atoning and redemptive self-offering would be incomplete, and there would be no gospel of a blood-bought forgiveness. If our Lord were off the cross but still in the grave, he would be a beautifully pathetic memory, but he would not be a mighty savior.

A Christ merely of the past is the object of memory, but not of faith. It takes a living Christ to be the object of faith. Are you following? Nor is our Lord Jesus a prisoner behind the misty curtains of the long ago.

His last word was, Lo, I am with you to the end of the age. Now, coming back to my comment of a moment ago, we simply cannot go back in point of time and enter into our Lord's Calvary suffering. They are over and done with.

They were not only one for all, they were once for all. But then again, equally clearly, none of us can enter, neither Paul nor John, neither James nor Peter, neither anybody past nor anybody present, none of us can enter into the sufferings of our Lord on Calvary because they were the unique and incommunicable sufferings of God incarnate. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, and we respect the Virgin Mary far too much ever to call her the Mediatrix.

There is no such thing as a Mediatrix. There is the one mediator, and the sufferings that he suffered on the cross cannot be participated in by any other being in the universe. So let's get it clear, when Paul spoke about knowing the sufferings of our Lord on the cross, when he spoke about the fellowship of his suffering, he was not referring to those finished and once for all sufferings on Calvary.

Then what did he mean? Well, I think, Mr. Chairman and friends, this is one of those cases where an illustration is perhaps easier than direct statement. A rather circuitous illustration, but quite to the point in the end, I wonder, has anybody now present ever read a little book called Down in Water Street by the late Sam Hadley? He's looking away. If ever you see that book, Down in Water Street, oh, you must get it.

In language now, it's rather yesterdayish, but in its message, it's never dying. Water Street Mission was founded by Sam Hadley, and it's still there, Water Street Mission, New York City. Sam Hadley was, oh, I beg your pardon, I'm telling you wrong.

It was founded by Jerry McCauley. That's it, that's it. You've got it, haven't you? Water Street Mission founded by Jerry McCauley.

And if ever you see that book, Down in Water Street, which is the story of the Water Street Mission, you must get it. Well, one night there stumbled in through the door of the Water Street Mission, New York, a drunken sot named Sam Hadley, bedraggled hair, bleary eyes, fuddled brain, dodderly legs, ragged, dirty, smelly, repulsive, just coming out of his umpteenth bout of delirium tremen. But in the sovereign providence of God, that drunken fellow, Sam Hadley, stumbled in through the ever-inviting door to Water Street Mission and slumped down in one of the rear seats.

For a time, he was too fuddled to take in anything of what was being said, but presently, under the genial warmth of the mission, his brain cleared. And for the first time in his wretched life, he heard that the God of the universe had clothed himself in flesh and blood and come down to save hell-deserving sinners and wrecks of humanity like Sam Hadley. And when the invitation was given at the end, Sam Hadley was one of a small group of men who went to the front and sank down at the penitent form.

And that night, Sam Hadley was converted. It was an earthquake, heavenquake, hellquake conversion. And Sam Hadley, who on that very night had 113 indictments against him in New York law courts, enough to put him in Sing Sing jail for the rest of his mortal years, which didn't seem like being many, that night he was converted and he has left on record that when he was regenerated, God plucked out of his very system the desire for crime and the taste for whiskey.

And don't you dare to think I'm just telling you something about somebody who doesn't matter very much. When Sam Hadley died, he had the biggest funeral ever seen in New York state. And when Jerry McCauley had passed on to his higher reward, Sam Hadley took over the superintendency of Water Street Mission.

Oh, you know, I feel so, I was going to say I feel so angry with you. I'm not angry, but, hmm, fancy your not having heard of Sam Hadley. Yes.

Let me ask you another question. Did you ever hear of Moody and Sankey? Really? I haven't finished. Did you ever hear of Torrey and Alexander? Ah, did you? Oh, you know, I think, I think of all evangelists I have ever heard or read, Torrey appeals most to me.

He was the evangelist logician. I like the syllogistic reasoning. He doesn't, you can't get a razor blade between his arguments.

And you know, when you get converted under that kind of constructive biblical evangelism, you've got a good foundation right from the first. But I want to mention his song leader, Charles Alexander. There never was a song leader like Charlie Alexander.

Tall, slim, slick, handsome, mellifluously silvery voice, charming manner, he was a wizard with choir, and, oh, he could get the crowd singing. Do you know it was Charlie Alexander who set the whole of Christendom singing the glory song, when all my labors and trials are o'er? And he must have been not only a handsome, captivating young American, he must have been a very wise young American, because he fell in love with, and became engaged to, and eventually married, a very sweet and dignified English young lady. Her name was Miss Helen Cadbury.

Her name was Miss Helen Cadbury. Did you ever hear of Cadbury's chocolate? No? Well, let me tell you, your first mouthful of Cadbury's chocolate will be an advanced installment of the coming millennium. And you know, when they were united in wedlock, the two of them came over and lived in New York, New York

City.

And young Alexander cogitated, and said, if I'm to be of maximum use in these great city-wide campaigns, I ought to know what goes on in cities like New York, under cover of night. He wanted to find out, and he knew just the man to whom he should go. And he went to Sam Hadley.

Sam Hadley knew the underworld, as very few men did. And one night, by arrangement, Sam Hadley and young Charles Alexander met, and they went on a strange excursion through New York, under cover of dark. And Sam Hadley took him to dens of vice, and haunts of lasciviousness, and places of gambling and violence, and places one can't mention.

By two o'clock, young Alexander's stomach was revolting. He was nauseated and was afraid he would vomit. Sam, he said, I'm sorry, I can't take any more.

I'll have to call off. So they retraced their steps down one avenue and along one street and round this corner and along this way, until they came to the place where they separated. Alexander going in one direction, and Sam Hadley in almost the opposite direction.

Now Sam Hadley had a limp, and the quick ear of young Alexander noted that after several paces the uneven gait ceased. On looking round, he saw Sam Hadley leaning on his wrist against a street lamp, thinking that perhaps he too had become sickly. Alexander quickly tiptoed back, and when he got within speaking distance, he was just going to say, Sam, Sam, are you not well when he heard this? And friends, I'm not trying to be dramatic.

Heaven forbid. But he heard this. Oh, God.

Oh, God. Oh, God, the sin of this city. The sin of this city is breaking my heart.

Oh, God. Friends, that is the fellowship of his suffering. And I'll tell you why.

Although our dear, dear Savior is no longer on the cross, remember the heart that broke and bled on that cross is the same heart. And metaphorically speaking, it still bleeds and suffers. It still melts with compassion over the millions of human beings on their way to damnation.

Now, Paul wanted to enter into that. But I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. Now, I wouldn't be surprised if somebody is inwardly querying, but, Dr. Baxter, does that mean that Sam Hadley was a rather morbid type of man? And you know, if we were not on such a sacredly solemn matter, that question would be almost comical.

Sam Hadley was just about the most consistently good-humored, convivial, congenial, happy-spirited man you could ever meet. Don't you see, we're touching now one of the exquisite paradoxes of the Christian experience. The more you enter into the sufferings of our Lord over the perishing, the nearer you get to his heart.

And the nearer you get to his heart, the nearer you get to his love. And the more you enter into his love, the more you are at the spring of the joy of heaven itself. It's one of those things you can't explain in words, but the more you share the fellowship of his suffering, the more you experience the exquisite joy of Jesus in your heart.

Are you following? Say yes. Yes. Well, I see the clock goes tick, tick, tick.

You're not tiring, are you? Now say no. No. Oh, I'll have you out in good time long before seven o'clock.

No, I think in the few minutes that I have left, I ought now to ask and very briefly to be answering the question, well then, how do we get to know him like this? And I think the answer is threefold. First, we need to get to know him. Will this sound rather unexpected? We need to get to know him first photographically in the four Gospels.

Hmm. As they say in America, perhaps that needs breaking down a little. We need to get to know him photographically as we see him in the Gospels.

You know, Mr. Maxwell and friends, one thing that rather disturbs me today is the ever-increasing number of supposed likenesses of our Lord in the flesh. Don't think I'm hypercritical. It may be there's a place for such suppositionary pictures of our Lord, but there's a danger in them too.

You can easily get your mind chained to a wrong mental picture of Jesus. You see, there has not come down to us through the centuries any authentic likeness of our Lord in his manhood. Nor do we have sufficient authentic data on which to construct a certain, an absolutely certain, physiognomical likeness of him.

In my own mind, I have a feeling that that is providential because our Lord Jesus was not the son of a man. He is the son of man. The blood of the whole human race coursed in his veins.

He doesn't belong exclusively to whites or blacks or browns or yellows or people of any other complexion. He is the son of man. And I think there may be some providence in the fact that we do not have an authentic physical likeness of our Master.

We don't possess one lock of his hair. We have never seen one glance of his eyes. We do not know whether he was more or less than six feet tall.

We do not know for certain whether he was slim or, as we would say, well-favored. We don't know, and maybe we are not meant to know just now. Shall I remind you how Paul said to the Corinthians, Henceforth we know no man, merely after the flesh.

Yea, even though we have known Christ after the flesh, and remember many of them had, yet even so, even him now know we no more after the flesh. Now Paul knew, just as well as you and I do, that the Jesus of the four Gospels is absolutely and indispensably basic to everything that is Christian. But he didn't want us to be limited to the Jesus who appeared in a material physique.

He wanted us to know him in a spiritual way as the living contemporary of every generation. And shall I remind you how John says, Beloved, even now we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear all that we are going to be. But we do know this, that when he shall appear, we shall become like him, for we shall see him as he, what's the next word, as he is, not as he was.

All right then, what is he like now? Well, we travel on quickly from John's pen in his first epistle to that same pen in the Apocalypse, and in the first vision on Patmos, Jesus appears, and in such overwhelming splendor, John says, it was overwhelming, greater than the sun in his meridian strength, and I fell at his feet as dead. Friends, there's not an artist on earth can put that on canvas. Now, I suppose the most popular of all the supposed likenesses of our Lord is Salmon's head and shoulders of the Master.

Please don't misunderstand, I would be in the front rank of those who extol it as a product of art. It is that, it's beautiful. But with all respect to the artist, I'm just as sure that Jesus wasn't like that.

I have never yet seen any picture of our Lord which corresponds to the picture of him that I carry in my own mind. Have you? Now, you see, the Holy Spirit came in a special way upon four penmen, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And he has given us a fourfold portrait of our Lord, and we are meant to get to know him, first of all, there, in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Oh, these four Gospels. You see, if our Lord Jesus is the Son of God incarnate, God manifest in the flesh, which of course he is, then these are the most important, remarkable, extraordinary documents unto the Son. All the time you're reading them, you're putting your feet in the sandal prints of God manifest in the flesh.

And I would say to you, younger people, get to know Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, or rather, the Jesus who lives and moves and speaks in those four Gospels. And if you will soak your minds in them, I'll prophesy that you will find what I find. The Holy Spirit will take the Jesus who moves before you in these four memoirs, and he will make him live to your mind.

We are touching something else just here that you can't very well put into words. But I ask you to make the experiment. Did you ever hear of the late Dr. G. Campbell Morgan? Oh, you did.

Well, once when I was preaching for Dr. Campbell Morgan in his own pulpit in Buckingham Gate, Westminster, London, England, he was there, and afterwards he and I were chatting in his vestry, and he told me that when he was a young man in the beginning of his ministry, there was a period of two years when he read nothing but the headlines of the newspaper each day and his mailbag, which wasn't a heavy one at that time. Apart from that, for two years he read nothing but Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And he said to me, Baxter, toward the end of that two-year period, I've got such a vision of Jesus.

I've never been the same since. I didn't say this to him because I didn't want to interrupt, but I knew this. Yes, and it was about that time that people began to sit up and say, Have you heard that young fellow, Campbell Morgan? Now, we can't all be Campbell Morgans, and we can't all be C. H. Spurgeons, and we can't all be D. L. Moody's, and we can't all be Billy Graham's.

I'm so glad we can't, or else there'd be nobody to preach to. You see, our Lord wants you as you, and He wants to mean something to you, if you'll let Him, that He can't mean to anyone else. You mean something to Him that I don't.

I mean something to Him that you don't. And corresponding with that, He wants to be to you what He can't be to me, and He wants to be to me what He can't be to anybody else. And if you want to get to know Him, really to know Him, you must start there.

Soak your mind in the... Oh, I'm mixing metaphors now. I was going to say soak your mind in the photography of the Holy Spirit. That won't do a bit, will it? I'll simply say soak your mind in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and get to know these four Gospels, really to know them.

But then, let me quickly add to that, we need to know our Lord not only photographically in the Gospels, we need to know Him interpretably in the Epistles. You see, in the four Gospels, our Lord is presented. In the New Testament letters, our Lord is interpreted.

Or in other words, in the four Gospels, we see Him as He is in Himself. In the New Testament Epistles, we see Him as He is meant to become to His people. Oh, I mustn't linger over this.

We never get out, but... Oh, these New Testament Epistles and the different facets which they give to us of our Savior. We need to know Him there. I remember once when I was 17, I was a junior clerk in an accountancy office in Lancashire, England, and in the early spring, we had a day's holiday.

I think it was Whitsuntide, or it could have been Easter, but it was a lovely day, and I went to some woods near our home, and I sat down on a grassy bank by a bubbling stream, and I'd only been converted, I suppose, about a year, a year and a bit, perhaps, and I read through Ephesians once, twice, three times, eight times, ten times, eleven times, twelve times. I think one of these mornings, I'll tell you what I found then. I've never been the same since.

You know, it's in Ephesians where we first come across those three mystic metaphors, Christ is the head, and we are the body, a living union. Christ is the bridegroom, and we are the bride, a loving union. Christ is the foundation, and we are the building, a lasting union.

Oh, you must, you must saturate your mind in the epistles if you want to know all that he wants to become to you. But, I'm sorry, am I going on too long? Say no, because I'm going to finish now. I don't want to do, but for your sakes, I will.

Are you listening? We need to know him, yes, photographically in the gospels, and yes, interpretedly in the epistles. But thirdly, and completely, we must get to know him experientially by regular, unhurried, daily, secret lingering in prayer. Now, that's where most of us fail, and fail most sadly, isn't it? We are all so blessed busy these days, we haven't time for the greatest thing of all.

And many of us who are just cluttered up with Christian service are almost poverty stricken spiritually. We must, are you listening? Those of you who are graduating, and some of you older people, we must get to know him by becoming men and women of prayer. You know, many people, many of the Lord's best known servants, on their deathbed, they've said, if I had my time to live over again, I'd give more time to prayer.

But I've never yet heard anybody say, and I've never heard of anybody who ever said, if I had to live my life over again, I'd pray less. I think, without any morbidity, we should forepicture what our thoughts will be when we are leaving the present life to enter the next. Oh, we must get to know him by this daily, eager, unhurried, lingering, secretly with him.

Don't you think so? I think I'll close with an illustration. It's about myself, if you don't mind, and it's been in one or two magazines, which I hope you haven't read. When I entered the Christian ministry at the age of 25, I determined I would be the most Methodist Baptist in history.

Oh, talk about Methodicity. Talk about Perfectionism. Talk about making plans.

I used to plan out the next day, you know, from rise at six in the morning, twenty minutes to dress and wash, so much time for prayer, so much time for Bible study, so much time for answering letters, so much time for visiting, so much time for exercise. Did you ever come across that text in the book of Judges, the stars in their courses fought against Cicero? Well, let me read you the devised version. The powers of evil in their wretched courses fought against poor Sidlow.

It seemed as though they had a fanatical passion to smash my plans to smithereens. And again and again I would come to the end of the day feeling defeated and wretched. And as I got absorbed in the busy enmeshments of the pastorate, I found more and more that system was a problem.

And I found that regular prayer was being nudged out. And even my time for Bible study was again and again encroached upon. And I'm sorry to have to report that traveling alongside with that there developed a feeling that I could get on without regular prayer.

And then the desire for it began to ebb away. Mind you, I was disturbed because deep, deep down I knew, Sid, no ministry of the word can be powerful unless it is a prayerful ministry. But I kept managing without regular prayer and for a time things seemed to go on all right.

But eventually there came a crisis. One morning I looked at my watch and according to my plan, for I was still struggling to keep some semblance of methodicity on the go, according to my plan, I was due for an hour's prayer. So I said, come on, Sid.

But just as I was about to go, a kind of velvety little voice somewhere inside me said, Sid, wait. You know you shouldn't be spending that hour in prayer. Look at that pile of letters on the desk, unanswered.

The really Christian thing, the practical thing, is answer those letters. So I thought, which shall I do? Shall I go for prayer? Shall I answer the letters? As we say in Scotland, that's where we are from, you know, I swithered. Did you ever hear that word? Oh, it's a wonderful word, that.

I swithered. That is, I vacillated. Oh, that's not much better, is it? Shall I shant I? Shall I shant I? And while I was swithering, that little voice spoke again.

And it said, Oh, Sid, Sid, you are ridiculous. Fancy keep flogging yourself on this matter of prayer. Give over.

Give over. Why? You're converted, you're born again, God has called you into the ministry, people are getting converted, and the auxiliaries are flourishing, and people are coming in to the church, and you've got no cause to worry. It's quite plain that God's blessing you.

And besides, God doesn't want just a lot of mystics. He needs the Martha's as well as the Mary's. You get on with the practical things, and God will see to all the other.

But you know, sometimes, friends, the enemy oversteps himself. And he did that morning. Because that velvety little voice from somewhere said, And in any case, Sid, why don't you face up to it and live with it? You are not one of the spiritual kind.

Oh. I don't want to use exaggerative terminology, but if you'd stuck a knife into my bosom, I don't think it could have hurt more. You are not one of the spiritual kind.

Now, I'm not of an introspective nature, but that morning, I took a careful look at the interior of James Sidlow Baxter. And I'll tell you what I found. There was indeed a part of me that didn't want to pray.

It was the part that we call the emotions. I wasn't in the mood for it. And I didn't want to go and pray.

I wanted to do the practical thing. But I also found that my emotions were naughty little hypocrites. Really, they were just hiding under the pretext of those unanswered letters to stop me from going to pray.

The letters were just an excuse. And as I looked more penetratively, I found there was another part of me that did want to pray. It's the part that we call the will.

Yes, the will to pray was there. But the mood, the desire, the emotion for it wasn't. And suddenly, I turned on my will and I said, Will, are you ready to go and pray? And Will said, Here am I. I'm willing.

So I said, Come on, Will. And I linked my arm through that of Will, and the two of us set off to go for our time of prayer. But the minute we took the first step, all the emotions sprang up and said, We're not coming, we're not coming, we're not coming, we're not coming.

And I saw Will stagger just for a moment, and I said, Will, can you stick it? And Will said, Yes, Sid, if you can. So Will and I, we went for our time of prayer. Now, if you had asked me at the end of that hour, Have you had a good time? Oh, I would have had to wring my hands and say, A good time, it's been a fight all the way through.

Heaven seemed like brass, and God seemed millions of miles away, and the Lord seemed unconcerned, and prayer seemed a mockery. You see, all over the place we find Christians. They think if they don't have a good time emotionally, that their prayer hasn't been effective.

We are all needing to learn that the validity of prayer does not depend upon the emotional condition of the one who prays. I may be equatorially hot or antarctically cold emotionally, but whether I'm tropic or frigid does not affect the validity of prayer in the name of Jesus. And if you had asked me, Have you had a good time? Meaning emotionally, I would have had to say the very opposite.

But we stuck it. And you know, that went on for about two weeks. And if you had asked me at the end of that two weeks, after that hour's prayer every day, I would have had to say, No, I'm afraid it's been a disappointing experience.

But after about two weeks, one morning when Will and I were going for prayer, I happened to hear one of my leading emotions say to the others, Come on you guys, they'll go whether we object or not. Now that morning, I can't say that the emotions were cooperative, but at any rate, they were quiescent. And Will and I were able to get on with praying undistractedly.

It was very much better than it was at first. Why, when I first started, in the middle of a most important prayer, I'd find one of the emotions had run off to the golf course and was playing golf, and I had to go and say, Come back! You see. But now I began to find, instead of being obstreperous, they were negatively agreeable.

You know, that went on for about two weeks, and if you'd said, Are you having an emotionally good time? I would have had to say, Oh no, no, no. It's more like the Sahara Desert. But you know, after about another two weeks, one morning when Will and I were praying, when we were no more thinking about the emotions than the man in the moon, suddenly one of my best known emotions jumped up and shouted, Hallelujah! And all the other emotions said, Amen.

And for the first time in my spiritual history, the whole of Sidlow Baxter, mind and reason and conscience and volition and feeling and emotion were all coordinated in one concentrated experience of prayer. And God was real, and heaven was open, and the Lord was there, and the Holy Spirit was moving through my mind and will and emotion. Are you tumbling to it? Look, I want those of us who are here today, whoever we are, wherever we live, however young or old we are, let this meeting today be the time when you

decide, whatever I may have been up till now, from this day forward I will be a praying Christian.

I believe if we could get the praying minority to its knees, we could determine the destiny of Canada and USA. I do, I wouldn't dare to say it if I didn't believe it. If we could get the evangelicals down to a prosecuting of prayer, I believe God is waiting to send revival.

However, what I'm concerned about is you and I as individuals. And if I've gone a bit long this afternoon, I'm sorry. You've got another dose in the morning.

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