

THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

CD 85 contains two Messages
Themes From Acts of the Apostles Chapters 1-2

Editorial Note: From 1956 - 1960, Sidney and Violet Cox lived in Miami, Florida. Sidney was on the teaching faculty of the Miami Bible Institute, teaching courses on the New Testament while serving as Professor of New Testament at the institute.

While in Miami, Sidney further developed a relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, who sponsored and supported the Miami Bible Institute. The Christian and Missionary Alliance operates a vast network of churches and is similar to a denomination. Miami Bible Institute trained ministers to enter pastorates in CMA churches. This series of messages or Bible lessons was delivered at the Miami Gospel Tabernacle, a local CMA church with a membership of 300-400 people. It is also believed that Sidney and Violet were members of this congregation at that time.

Other references in this series would date them to October 1959 at which time Sidney was 72 years of age.

He describes that this series was to last for six months; however, we have only found the first four installments of the series that cover the first four chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. February 2009.

Tracks 6-11. Themes from Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2. “The Empowering of the Holy Spirit – The Day of Pentecost”

Introduction from the live deliverance of this message to The Gospel Tabernacle in Miami, Florida¹
...turn this morning, and a particular word of welcome to our visiting friends. We're always so glad to see you. We say over and over again, "You're only a visitor in this class once." So, if you're enjoying the sensation of being a visitor, make the most of it, you'll never have it again. You're just a visitor once, here; from then on, you belong.

We're so grateful for the word regarding Brother Leeman and others, and we shall be remembering them in prayer. Some of our friends in this class are carrying burdens that have to do with business affairs and we want to remember them this day as they do what they feel the Lord wants them to do.

Now, let's have a word of prayer and then we'll go on with our study where we left it last week.

Our Father, we pray that Thou wilt open up Thy word to us and make it beautiful and precious and powerful and cleansing. We pray that the Word of God shall take up its abode comfortably within our hearts, illuminating our minds, cleansing us as only the Word of God can cleanse us. And so for this

¹ This was extracted from a cassette tape that I have not saved for posterity since it was a duplicate of the message contained on CD-85.

particular portion of Thy Word and these precious minutes together, we pray for Thy blessing and Thy power and Thy guidance. In Jesus name. Amen.

Beginning of Sermon

Now, if you will turn please to your quarterlies or to your Bible, so that we may read together just a few of the verses that introduce today's lesson, and then we will go back and link up just a little bit of last Sunday's lesson so that we may come into this one with, I was going to say intelligently, I think perhaps that's the word, because without the completion of last week's lesson there would be a gap at the beginning of this week's lesson and certain questions that might be raised.

Will you notice, if you please, as we turn to Acts 2:1-4, and we'll read the first section. And then, if we have time, we will read other sections afterwards because they are intensely important. That second section in which Peter begins to talk, a transformed Peter, now under the power of the Holy Spirit; controlled by the Holy Spirit; a Peter that is entirely different to the Peter that we saw, not merely ten days ago, but almost the day before, he was still the same old Peter, although there was a vast change coming, you could see that. Let's read these words together.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,”²

Remember, if you please, that there are two days that are described in that way. One is described as, 'In the fullness of times' which means exactly the same thing. There was a day previous to this described in just these words. It's was the day when our Lord was born in the flesh here in the earth. And, “When the fullness of time had come,” that's one day. Now here is the next great fullness of time. God's clock is striking once more.

Remember that God's clock always strikes on time, and it would be just as well for us to remember that when you've got such characters around the world as Khrushchev³ and the rest of them. It's just as well to remember that whatever they can do, they cannot put one finger on God's clock, not one. They can't stop it for just one moment, not one. God's clock is going to strike just when God has it in mind.

Now, here are two points: our redeemer coming in the flesh; God manifest in the flesh. That's the crucial point of our faith. When men go astray there, they go astray everywhere. Now the other point is, the coming of the Holy Spirit which is equally important, and I say that thoughtfully. Here we have it again, the fullness of time. God's clock strikes, and there is another tremendous moment and here it is.

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place.”⁴

And remember beloved, that's the first time you've seen anything like that. The disciples have been in one place many a time, but they have never been of one mind and one accord before, never. But now, something has happened. Something has happened, and here they are now, of one mind, of one accord, one thought, one desire, one purpose in mind. They had never been like that before.

2 Acts 2:1

3 The leader of Russia at the time this sermon was delivered, the beginning of the so-called “Cold War.”

4 Acts 2:1

Peter and John, for instance, had never agreed before. There had always been something there between them, always, right up to the very last. Remember what Peter said when our Lord was talking to him beside the lake of Galilee, almost under the shadow of the event of the ascension. And even then, you will remember, that in spite of the fact that our Lord had been saying to Peter, “You feed my lambs and you feed my sheep, and lovest thou me more than these”⁵, and so on. In spite of it all, out comes Peter there, “What about this man? What are you going to do about him? What about him?”⁶ And our Lord had to rebuke him there and say, “That isn't any of your business Peter. If I want him to stay until I come, that's my affair.”⁷ And he had to put him into his place right away.

Now here they are of one accord. You don't find anything like that now. They are of one accord in one place.

“And suddenly there was a sound from heaven.”⁸

Now, if you want an interesting study in your scripture sometime, and you will see that I'm just going along here talking out of my heart to you this morning, not with any particular planned lesson, although I do have a planned lesson. But there are certain things where we just talk our hearts out. If you want an interesting study, you find out how many things happen suddenly in the scripture. Suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, suddenly. And it's amazing how many things of great importance happen suddenly. One moment it was not there, and the next moment it is. Suddenly, and it's tremendous, the thing that happens.

“And suddenly, there came a sound from heaven.”

Now I want you to notice in which the coming of the Holy Spirit appealed to them, first to sound and then to sight. Notice it, “There came a sound from heaven and a rushing mighty wind.”⁹ It's just as well for us to remember that here is the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had been in the world in a certain way before that. There was a way in which the Holy Spirit had come to the disciples before this, when our Lord before his ascension breathed upon them and said, “Receive, ye the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰ Now, here He is coming in power, in majesty to take control. This is it, He's going to throw the switch and the power of heaven is going to be released. Everything is ready, all the power is stored up in the dynamo. All the wiring is completed; everything is ready there, but there isn't any power. And now here He comes and He throws the switch because the conditions are right now. He couldn't throw the switch until there was one mind, one place, one accord. That's the condition.

Now, here He comes and remember, if you please, that when He comes, He comes with a demonstration that is given to us in this way. The Holy Spirit's power, and remember, there isn't any difference between His power and His person; where ever His person is, His power is; that we find Him before us in three ways in the scripture: water, wind, and fire. Now, we've got two of them here. You'll remember that in

5 John 21:15-17

6 John 21:21

7 John 21:22

8 Acts 2:2

9 Acts 2:2

10 John 20:22

that seventh chapter of John when our Lord said, "Out from their inmost being shall flow rivers of living water."¹¹ Mississippi's of living water shall flow out of their inmost being there. And when they said what do you mean, the answer was, "This spake he of the Spirit."¹² The most powerful elements that we know anything about are water, wind and fire. They are the most destructive if they are out of line, and the most powerful and useful so long as they are controlled. Now, here in order to bring this matter down to the level of our thinking, you find these illustrations: water, now here are the other two, wind and fire.

Now, notice as we go along.

"Suddenly, there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them."¹³

Notice if you please, that there are two things that are done here. One, a place is filled, and two, a person is touched. You'd don't find that the cloven tongues of fire filled the place at all. Now, there's a reason for that. But you do find that the cloven tongues of fire, the symbol of the power, and remember the symbol of the tongue is very important too, not merely the fire. It's wonderful to have the fire but it's wonderful when the fire controls the tongue, because of all the things that need to be controlled in these personalities of ours, it's our tongue, isn't it? We certainly need the touch of fire in our lives, but we need that touch particularly upon our tongues, because remember, that these disciples and others that came after them, right down to the time in which we live, were to do to one thing - they were to go out in the world and preach the gospel to every creature. This was their task. Now, the way in which you preach the gospel to every creature is by the medium of words and then the tongue. That's the main thing. Some of it is done elsewhere, in other ways, of course, but it's the tongue that needed that touch of fire, that touch of control, that touch of liberation that would enable it to do what God wants it to do.

And if you want to see what the touch of the tongue of fire did for any of the disciples, you cast your eyes just a few minutes afterwards and watch Peter at work, and you can see what this meant to him - for he was doing things there within a few minutes of this time that he could not possibly have done at any other time. This disciple who would just a few days before, had said, "We go fishing. I'm sick and tired of death of being in the ministry. It doesn't pay anything. You don't get anywhere with it. You don't get any satisfaction out of it. I'm going right back fishing where I came from." Because that's what it means, not merely that he was going back fishing just for the moment, but he was going back into the fishing business or other. He'd thrown the ministry overboard. Peter had resigned, right there and then. And that was only ten days before, or a little while before.

Now find him here; look what's happened to him now. Look what's happened to him now. For some of the things that happened to him happened in that ten days of tarrying there. And tarrying is not a word that needs to cause us any disturbance. There are some folks that interpret that word 'tarrying' as if it meant getting down into a certain attitude and staying there in certain agony of soul. And you've got to tarry and tarry and tarry and tarry until something happens. The word 'tarry' doesn't mean anything of the kind. The word 'tarry' means simply, "sit down and wait" - find a comfortable chair and sit down and wait, and don't

11 John 7:38

12 John 7:39

13 Acts 2:2,3

you move until something happens. You just stay right there. That's what 'tarry' means - just make yourself at home, make yourself comfortable there. Just stay there, let's just do this.

Now, here then is this word that is coming to us.

“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”¹⁴

In other 'dialects' is the word. There isn't any evidence here that it was an unknown tongue. There is every evidence that what they were doing here was speaking in a known tongue. Now there are spots in the New Testament revelation where they spake in an unknown tongue, and where an interpreter was necessary. That's all part of it there. Now, in this particular case, what they were doing there was, they were breaking the good news now to the people who were gathered around, folks from different places who spoke different tongues and different dialects, and each one of them heard in their own tongue. It wasn't a matter of an unknown tongue at all. And the amazing thing that came to them was that they knew that these unlearned and ignorant fishermen knew nothing about the tongue or the dialect in which they were speaking. They knew nothing about it. And it was a matter of utter amazement to them.

Now for just a minute or two, let's go back and talk about this ten day period there, for just a minute there, and we won't take long about it. Remember our Lord had now gone back to Heaven. Here were these disciples standing on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. A cloud, a glory cloud, the effulgence of God had come. The Shekinah Glory had come and enwrapped Him, because He got to pass through the air up there where the prince of the power of the air was, and this was His protecting shield as He went up to glory, there. It wasn't a rain cloud at all. It was a glory cloud. We'll know something about that glory cloud after a while, because when God changes us from glory unto glory and we go up in that fashion, the total number of those who are going up will be like a glory cloud again.

But here He went, and now these disciples are left behind, but something has happened to them. Remember, that just before He went He breathed upon them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" and He meant what He said when He said that. Now here they are. They didn't know what that meant, not at all. They didn't have full understanding of that; they were to wait in Jerusalem in order that they might know the significance of this thing. The Holy Spirit was coming to take control of them.

And we're greatly indebted to Dr. Wiest for certain things that he said last week, and one of the things was this, that when we speak of the fullness or the filling of the Holy Spirit, that we must keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is not a substance, and that our hearts and lives are not merely empty vessels. We are much more than that. The heart is not an empty vessel, it is the center of our thought, of our will, of our purpose; all of these things; and the Holy Spirit comes and takes control of these things, that's the filling of the spirit. It isn't a matter of something being poured into something that was empty before. It's a matter of the control; the grip of the Holy Spirit upon us so that out of our lives now, fullness may flow. Without His grip upon our lives, there would be no such thing as fullness flowing out of our lives. Now, the beginning of this is seen in that ten day period.

Here are these disciples. What are they going to do, the eleven of them? Presently the group gathers

¹⁴ Acts 2:3,4

around them and they want to know about this. Will you describe to us what happened when our Lord went away? What did He say? Did anybody say anything about Him coming back again? And they most certainly wanted to know that. Because, remember that when He told them about His going in that 14th chapter of John and in the Upper Room, you'll remember there He not only said, "I'm going", but He said, "I'm coming back again."¹⁵ Now they want to know, did He say anything about coming back again? And they said, "Well, there were the heavenly visitors there, these men in white robes, who came in glittering garments." And they said, "This same Jesus shall so come again in like manner as ye have seen him go."¹⁶ And so he will.

And here then was this. What a change was beginning to grip them then. If they'd had any variations before, you can find that all the differences are now disappearing. It is quite true that Peter is still the outstanding one of the group, but they gathered together. They want to get together now. The first thing that happened is that they seek a place of fellowship; a place apart from the rest. And they find this room where ever it may have been. We're not told where it was. Some think it was in the temple. Some think it was the same upper room where our Lord gathered with His disciples, although it would have been difficult to gather 120 people in a room like that, and they stayed there day after day, not merely praying all the time. They did pray considerably, but they did something else while they were there.

For instance, the question of the filling of the vacancy in the twelve arose. What are we going to do about this? Judas is out. What are we going to do about this? You'll remember that Peter took the lead in that, and they cast lots and the lot fell upon Mathias, and he became, for the time being at any rate, one of the twelve.

Now, don't ask me whether that was the correct thing to do because I don't know, and don't ask me whether Mathias was definitely the one to fill the twelve, because I don't know. And when such men as Dr. Leon Tucker take one side and Campbell Morgan takes the other, you can excuse a poor fellow like me for hesitating to know just where to sit on a subject like that. I don't know where to sit, it doesn't matter. I don't care whether he's one of the twelve or not. Personally, I like to think that the Lord put Paul in there, but that's only an opinion, but there. Now, that was done. There were so many things that were done up there in that upper room.

We talk about the day of Pentecost and Peter's first sermon, but Peter preached another sermon before that. You'll remember that during that ten day period, Peter preached a great sermon, and you'll find it there in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, and it's a tremendous thing, this word that came from Peter himself. Let me read a little bit to it.

"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled; which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."¹⁷

Now here is an obscure reference in one of David's psalms that Peter didn't know anything about before, and now suddenly he knows that that is a reference to Judas, and he's the one that brings that out. Here is the evidence that the Holy Spirit has now got a control on Peter that he did not have before. And he was

15 John 14:3

16 Acts 1:11

17 Acts 1:16

numbered with us, and all the rest of these things. This is Peter's first address and it's a very wonderful thing.

I'll tell you something else that happened in that upper room, in that ten day period. The arrangement of the disciples was changed. Now, let me tell you what I mean by that. You will find that up to this time, the twelve have been in series of threes: Peter, James and John; Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew; and so on, and you will find threes all the way down. Now you don't find that anymore. From this point on, you find the disciples are in twos, and the strange thing about it, it isn't Peter, James and John – it's Peter and John. And it's James and Andrew. And you find there's a difference there, and when you find two men going up to the temple to pray there at the hour of prayer and a man lame from his birth, it isn't Peter and James and John, it's Peter and John that are together. These are the two. There has been an alignment now - a difference that the Holy Spirit has brought about, and you find this is there.

Now, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and this is the thing that we are talking about this morning, and we certainly wish that there was time for us and that we had ability to talk about this as it ought to be. Now let's notice two things that happened up there in that upper room: one, the sound as of a rushing mighty wind. Here is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit coming to the ear in the first place, and the cloven tongues of fire, the eye, in the second. He comes in two ways: through the ear, and through the eye. The sound of the might rushing wind, and remember that that also was the word that our Lord used regarding Him, the Holy Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but we do not know from whence it came or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."¹⁸

Now, here's the picture of it there. Here is the sound of the mighty rushing wind. It fills the room. It wasn't a matter there of an individual thing. There is a collective manifestation. There is an individual manifestation. Now what was he doing with the collective manifestation? When that sound of the mighty rushing wind filled the room, 120 people were in that room. Some of them men, some of them women, but they were in one place, of one accord. They had come to a place of absolute unity on this point. They wanted what the Lord Jesus wanted, and they wanted it first, last and all the time. They had no ambitions apart from His will. His will, His will, His purpose. That was the great thing.

And the Holy Spirit comes and takes 120 people who want nothing but the will of God for their lives and nothing but the purpose of Jesus for their lives and He does something with them that had never been seen in earth or heaven before - he welds them together in one body. Now in that moment, one body was formed, 120 people before, now they are one body in Christ. And this is that sublime act by which the Holy Spirit forms for the first time the body of Christ. And here they are, one body. We are baptized into one body. Now there is the act there before us, and it took place in that upper room and it was a collective act. Now in addition to that, these people were not just one thing, they were still 120 people.

Now, we at the Miami Gospel Tabernacle are one church. There is a sense in which we have achieved a unity there. We are one church. But in addition to that, we are still three or four hundred individuals, and each one of us has his job to do. You have yours, I have mine. What are we going to do about that?

Each of these disciples was to go here or there or somewhere else, and carry this word. They needed the empowering of the Holy Spirit in order that this might be carried out - the purpose of exalting the Lord

¹⁸ John 3:8

Jesus Christ. And remember please, the heart of the Gospel is not merely the declaration of a doctrine; it is the exaltation of a person. That's the heart of a doctrine, and these people are to go out and lift up Jesus and set Him before the world, and when He is thus set before the world, miracles happen. The Holy Spirit will take that sort of a witness that exalts the Lord Jesus Christ and work miracles with it. Now each one of them was receiving his own particular empowerment.

Isn't it wonderful that each one of us, we're not merely in spite of our exalted position as members of the body of Christ; we are still servants of His. We are still those upon whom the Spirit can rest individually, personally; and that He says to you and to me, "I want you to do this job. I want you to perform this task." And the empowerment always comes - the release of power that came from that moment. Now you can see what was happening there. The Holy Spirit had come and welded them into one body. That was the first thing. And then He had come and taken his control over them. He had come to be the controlling general of that particular army that was going out to face the world. Now let's follow that simple, little illustration through.

You can have as many men as you want with the finest equipment that they have; the best blueprints of battle that you need, that you can find. You can find it all, you can have it all, but there is one thing that must be in the center, there must be a controlling, guiding personality who touches the button and starts the thing going. Now you can gather as many men as you want to on the beaches of Normandy. You can gather ships and planes, as many as you want to, on the beaches of Normandy, and everything is ready. You've got all the ammunition, all the money, all the equipment, everything, everything, everything, everything. But there was one thing that was needed before anything moved. What was it? A man to touch the button. And from that moment on, things began to move.

Now here were things being gathered together – equipment, power – but until the Holy Spirit takes control, touches the button, we are going to be helpless and hopeless as far as any actual fruitage in our lives is concerned. Now that's what He did on that day. He came and touched the button and when He did, my, how these men went out from that point on, and that particular thing, how they went out there and you could see immediately what had happened to them, how beautifully they'd carried out then the thing that the Lord Jesus said would happen in that upper room. "When He comes, you will have power." So they did. When He comes, you will have spiritual intelligence, and so they did. "When he comes, he will touch the springs of your memory and he will bring back to your remembrance"¹⁹

(audio ends)

¹⁹ John 14:26