

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

CD 86 contains two Messages
Themes From Acts of the Apostles Chapters 3-4

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 8-14. Themes from Acts of the Apostles Chapter 4.
“The Next Stage - Persecution of the Early Church ”**

... the Acts of the Apostles. We have been going quietly through this very wonderful book, this historical book of the New Testament church - the book that begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome, and covers everything in between. And it's a very remarkable story that we have here. And every step of it is equally remarkable. In the beginning of it we saw the beginning, the formation, the birth of the new church, the early church, the body of Christ. How, on the Day of Pentecost, these believers were welded into one body, and given equipment for a task that had already been mentioned to them. The task of the great commission: they were to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. When you consider that they didn't know anything about the world, and they didn't know anything about the gospel and they didn't know anything about preaching, you can see how they needed equipment. They certainly did. And how equipment was given exactly as they needed. Cloven tongues of fire, in order to give out a word. The mighty rushing wind, in order to indicate the areas of great movement outward of this new thing that had been brought into being as the fruit of Calvary.

Then last week, we were taught we were watching the beginning of the ministry of the early church. How did this thing begin? The Day of Pentecost is one thing, the day after Pentecost is quite another. There are no cloven tongues of fire on the day after. There is no sound of a mighty rushing wind on the day after. There is no crowd on the day after. There is no miraculous evidence of the spirit's power when men heard the message in their own dialects. You don't find that on the day after. What did we

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find on the day after - the pattern of the beginning of the early church. And remember, whenever you find, as we shall see again this morning, whenever you find the first emergence of anything, it gives you the pattern of what it ought to be from then on. How did the early church begin? How did it begin its ministry?

Well, we noticed several things about it. One, it did not begin in the temple or in the synagogue; it began outside. It did not begin with a crowd; it began with one man. It didn't begin with an intelligent man; it began with a helpless man - a man who had nothing but his helplessness to offer, nothing, not one thing. He was an evidence of God's grace because God's grace always works in the realm of the impossible. What we want to see now is what is going to be the next step along the line of the history of the Christian church.

First, born, brought into being, welded into one body, this great fact, empower. There's the beginning of it. Then you find where it begins, and where it should have stayed. And it began, not with a crowd, but with an individual, a helpless, hopeless individual. That's where it began. The church's big business is still with the impotent man outside the temple. That's the big business of the church still. The biggest thing the church can do is to do right there. To do this thing, the same as we see at the beginning.

Now, what's going to be the next step along the line? What is the inevitable thing that follows this? Well, that's our lesson this morning, and I'm going to ask that you follow it, if you please, perhaps you'd like to read it out loud if you have your lesson leaflets. Let's read it out loud. That will at least bring up some of us into the class. It's one thing to sit in a class, it's one thing to be here. Lot's of folks sit in a class who are not here at all. And Acts 4:1-14, we'll read it all. It'll take two minutes and ten seconds, if you want to check it there. Alright, let's read it.

“And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day, for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, ‘By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, ‘Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.”¹

Now, if you don't get anything else out of this class this morning, you've sure got a slice of Father's bread right there, I'm telling you. And it's got real butter on it, doesn't it? It sure has. That's a real slice

¹ Acts 4:1-14

of our Father's bread, right there. Whether you get anything else or not. Now, let's have a word of prayer and then we'll go on an talk about some of the details of this.

(Prayer)

Our Father, for thy guidance and thy blessing and thy illumination we pray. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

Now, let's recall please, and set the stage for this. Let's recall in just a moment the miracle that happened; the location of it, by the beautiful gate of the temple; the time of day when it happened, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of prayer, the time of the evening sacrifice, the time of the evening oblation. Although the sacrifice and the time of prayer were not identical, there was thirty minutes difference between them, but they were practically around the same time. Now, this is the time when it happened.

Two men were going up into the temple at that hour. A man who had been there by the beautiful gate of the temple from his birth, more than forty years he had been there. Everybody in Jerusalem had seen this man by the eautiful gate of the temple. Judaism had had nothing to say to him for forty years, not one word. No priest had had one word to say to him, not one. No scribe had had one word to say to him. No Pharisee had been able to say one word to him. No Sadducee had been able to say one word to him. There wasn't a high priest or a low priest that had had anything to do with him there, not one word. Judaism, in the presence of this man with his utter helplessness, was equally helpless. Now that's the situation that we find here. And then we see this miracle.

The man lifted, raised, his strength coming back to him in the power of the name that is above every name. A man is transformed before their very eyes. And the people that were standing around about them, most of them Jews. Nearly all the Jews of the dispersion and Gentiles that might have been any where around, they had already gone back. The feast was over. Now, these were the regular Jews of Jerusalem that were there and they were utterly amazed and Peter gives them the explanation.

Now, notice, if you please, that Peter is assuming here the role of a teacher. Because one of the things that you noticed in that scripture reading was, that the people who came afterwards and took them into custody and stopped them in this meeting that they were having with these inquiring people, they did it on several counts. But one of them was, they taught the people. Now, teaching the people was a prerogative that didn't belong to everybody. It was a prerogative that was given to an exclusive few. You had to be a teacher before you had any right to teach. And Peter was anything but that. And John was anything but that. Neither one of them had any standing before that crowd as a teacher. Now the evidence, the incontrovertible evidence of the power of their message and of the name was right there before them. A man who was impotent, now stands whole. Now, you can't gain say that. That is an argument that simply cannot be gained say. Here was the evidence of it. No question about it what ever.

Now, let's go on and see what is the next step, the inevitable next step, in the history of the church. And just as we saw the beginning of the ministry of the church; and just as we saw the birth of the church, now let's look at the next step that is inevitable in the history of the church and see how it happened. Because when you look at it, you get the pattern of the thing that's going to happen from then on.

It is the inevitable thing of persecution. Now, you've got power, and product, and now persecution.

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And it is the inevitable thing. Persecution is bound to come. Now, keep in mind, if you please, this thing that we referred to a moment ago, the law of first emergence. Whenever you find something appearing for the first time, it gives the pattern for that thing from then on. Now, here is the first appearance of persecution as far as the early church is concerned. It is something there that appears for the very first time. There had been no persecution on the Day of Pentecost, not at all. But now, there is persecution. This is the first time it appears.

Now, let's ask ourselves, in what way did it appear? From what source did it appear? Why did it appear? Because if you can find this thing here, you can see how persecution is going to appear from then on. Where did it come from? Well, now in the first place, let's remember this: It was a religious persecution. It wasn't a persecution by gangs of folks, not at all. It wasn't the persecution that comes from skid row. It was a persecution that came from the temple, and not only from the temple, but from the highest realms of the temple too. Now, we know who headed this persecution, for suddenly in the midst of this, these people appear. And here they are, once more in the midst, and they are finding themselves faced with persecution.

Who are these people that are now carrying them over until the next day so that they can examine them before the Sanhedrin? Who are these people? Well, now we were told who they were. They are the V.I.P.'s. These are the religious aristocracy who led the persecution against the church. Now, don't forget beloved, that when the church is true to its commission, and true to its message, and true to its Lord, and stays where it ought to stay, and do what it ought to do, it will be the object of attack from the V.I.P.'s of organized religion. It always happens. That's where it began. Didn't begin with the common people; it began with the religious folks. Who were these religious folks? Take a look at them there and see who it was that led this first persecution against the Christian church. Who were they?

Well, there was Annas, for instance. Now, Annas was the old high priest who had been deposed by the Romans years before, and was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the actual high priest at that time, but the old man still held the reins. He was still the power behind the throne. This old man, Annas, you'll remember, that in the trial of our Lord, he had a special word to say about it there. It wasn't just a general trial that Annas appeared in it there. Now you've got him, this old man there who was deposed by the Romans years before. Because, remember that the Romans had a hand in selecting and approving the high priest of Judaism. And the reason for that is, that the life of Israel was so tied up with their religion that if there was going to be any rebellion against Roman authority, it would start in religious circles. And they were going to be quite sure that they'd got the right man there at the head of the Jewish religion. And they put their man in there, and they had that authority and that right and they exercised it.

You've got Caiaphas; you've got the captain of the temple guard that was there. Now, he wasn't any soldier at all. He was the head of a religious group that exercised authority and care over the temple affairs. He was the head of this. A temple militia, if you like. But not a soldier group at all. Now, you've got him there. Here he is.

Now I want you to notice something else that's a change. The men who came, principally, were the Sadducees. Now I want you to notice a change there. We've been seeing changes all the way along here. We saw a change with Peter and John, instead of Peter, James and John. Now I want you to notice it's the Sadducees that are in evidence. Let me ask you this question. We can think this through for ourselves. Who were the people before, during the life of our Lord and before his crucifixion, who

were the people who opposed him? Who were the people against whom he spoke such terrible words? Who were they? The Pharisees, exactly so. They were the Pharisees, but from now on you don't see nearly as much of the Pharisees as you did before. They faded out of the picture, and instead of that, you see this other group that was scarcely mentioned, only occasionally, on this side of the cross. Now they are in evidence on this side and they are the center of opposition. Now, why? Why? Why do you see the Sadducees suddenly in evidence on this side?

It's because the Sadducees, beloved, were the modernists of those days. The Pharisees, strange to say, were the fundamentalists, whatever their behavior may have been. They were the ones who believed as they ought to have believed, in the law of Moses. But the Sadducees were the crowd who had thrown out everything that was supernatural. They did not accept anything that was supernatural. Now, the greatest evidence of the supernatural that had ever happened on earth until that time, and probably ever will happen was, listen to it, the resurrection of our Lord. Now that was the greatest supernatural thing that had ever happened and this was the thing that the Sadducees were particularly antagonistic against, because they refused to believe it. And because the resurrection was now in evidence, the Sadducees opposing it are also in evidence. Now you've got this crowd. Here they are. It isn't the people, there.

Now, in addition to that, you will always find that persecution against the church comes from those who have some ax to grind; who have some personal interest that is being disturbed by the growth of the church. Whenever the church interferes with some kind of personal interests, you can be quite sure there will be opposition and persecution. Now, you can turn through this record any way you please and you'll find that the folks who were opposing them and leading rebellions against them and difficulties were the folks who had some personal interest.

Who was it that caused the disturbances, for instance, at Ephesus? Who were they? Well, they were the people who were losing their business because the little images of Diana, the little silver images that they had been making, that their business had now gone. And consequently, they led the opposition to the growth of the church and those who were responsible.

In every place you go, you will find it's somebody that had an ax to grind; a personal interest that was being disturbed. These people had been the ones to say what should be believed and what should not. And now, here were the upstarts who hadn't gone to any school, who were not graduates of any seminary, who were ignorant and unlearned fishermen, as these people described them there. Here were these people assuming the role of the teacher, and teaching things that were directly against that which had been taught by the Sadducees and had been encouraged by the high echelons of the temple. Now that's the thing that they were facing. It came from this source, not from the people. The people didn't oppose it; the people received the message.

Did you notice that the second in that scripture reading that we find the second reference to the number of those who are being brought into the church? How many were brought in on the Day of Pentecost? Will somebody tell me? Three thousand, right. What was the figure that was given here, what? Five thousand. And remember, it's not just five thousand, it's five thousand men. Now you can be quite sure that that figure can easily be doubled because every man influences a family somewhere. And here is the growth of the church. It wasn't the people that opposed it, not at all. It was the upper brackets of organized religion.

I want you to notice what happened there. Peter and John were arrested and probably the man who had

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been healed as well, although it doesn't definitely state that. But Peter and John were arrested, and put in hold, which simply means they were detained legally until the next morning. Now, I want you to notice this, if you please, that when the Lord Jesus was taken prisoner, that while that law that they could not try him at night - they had to wait until the next morning - was still on their statute books, in the case of the trial of our Lord, they ignored that and broke their own law and tried him all night long, you remember, which was contrary all together to Jewish law. The Jewish law said you may take a man prisoner, but you can't try him until the next morning. Now, when the next morning comes, what a scene this is, isn't it? What a scene we've got before us this time.

Here are the Sanhedrin, is the members of the Sanhedrin, made up of these very folks that are described here. Seventy of them, probably seventy-one with the chairman. And here they are. In addition to that, as Campbell Morgan² suggests, there might have been and doubtless were there also, a good many young men studying to be rabbis; studying for what we call the ministry. And when there was a trial taking place, a religious trial taking place, when that took place these young men were invited and they could come and sit in and watch what happened in the courtroom. Now, you will notice what did happen in the courtroom.

Here are these two men and, as well with them, the man who was impotent the day before but who is now every with whole. Here he stands; here are these two men, standing, Peter and John. Here were the faces of these people, these religious leaders who were in deadly opposition to the thing that they were doing. Now, how did it start there, this courtroom scene? What was to be their point of attack? Remember, if you please, that when Peter was explaining to the people the day before what had happened and told them, that it was in the name of one who had been raised from the dead. Peter, on every occasion there, stressed this: You crucified him, and God raised him. Now that's the two things, there are the two points of Peter's sermon. Day of Pentecost, the evening of this miracle, the same thing comes out in his testimony now.

What is it that they're going to inquire about? What, what is it? Well, there are two things: by what power and in what name. Now they wanted to know this. By what power, in what name have you done this? And if you want to know how contemptuous these people were of this whole situation, they point

² G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) was born on a farm in Tetbury, England, the son of a Baptist minister. When Campbell was 10 years old, D. L. Moody came to England for the first time, and the effect of his ministry, combined with the dedication of his parents, made such an impression on young Morgan, that at the age of 13, he preached his first sermon. Two years later, he was preaching regularly in country chapels during his Sundays and holidays.

In 1886, at the age of 23, he left the teaching profession, for which he had been trained, and devoted himself to preaching and Bible exposition. He was ordained to the Congregational ministry in 1890. He had no formal training for the ministry, but his devotion to studying of the Bible made him one of the leading Bible teachers in his day. His reputation as preacher and Bible expositor grew throughout England and spread to the United States.

In 1896, D. L. Moody invited him to lecture to the students at the Moody Bible Institute. This was the first of his 54 crossings of the Atlantic to preach and teach. After the death of Moody in 1899, Morgan assumed the position of director of the Northfield Bible Conference. After five successful years in this capacity, he returned to England (in 1904) and became pastor of Westminster Chapel of London. His preaching and weekly Friday night Bible classes were attended by thousands. Leaving Westminster Chapel in 1919, he once again returned to the United States, where he conducted an itinerant preaching/teaching ministry for 14 years. Finally, in 1933, he returned to England, where he again became pastor of Westminster Chapel and remained there until his retirement in 1943. Morgan died on May 16, 1945, at the age of 81.

their fingers to the man who had been raised and was now every with whole, and speak of him that way, have you done this? And you can just see the contempt dripping off the end of their fingers as they point to him there and speak of him as "this." You've done "this." Now, you will notice that in the reply, Peter reverses their questions. They asked about the power and the name, but when Peter gives his explanation he gives the name first and the power afterwards. He reverses this. Now you see what he says.

First of all Peter clears the air there and I think he did a right good job in that courtroom, he sure did. He reminded them that here was a good deed, not a bad one. Here was something that was incontrovertible as far as its good result was concerned, as if he had been saying something that we suggested right at the beginning. What could Judaism have done about this? Why didn't it do something before? This was a good deed, as if he was saying to these folks, "You and everybody else who follows you had had the opportunity to do something for this man for forty years and you hadn't done one thing for him. He was just exactly the same at the end of forty years as he was at his birth - lame from his birth. You hadn't done one thing for him." Now here is a good deed, it isn't a bad deed. It's a good deed. Now in this trial, it had better be kept in mind, indicates old Peter, that the thing that has happened is a good deed and maybe he might have added this: "And there are hundreds of people who already know that." It makes a difference, doesn't it? There are lots of folks who'll understand that. Now here these men defend themselves.

Did you notice the first thing that was said about them? Here is the defense of the church and of the individual member of the church that is absolutely perfect. Did you notice what was said about them first? It didn't say they were eloquent in what they said. It didn't even say they were factual. What did it say? As the first thing we know about these men as they stood before this crowd to answer the accusation and to meet the persecution, what was the first thing that was said about them? What, and Peter, what? Say it out loud. "Filled with the Holy Ghost." Now there's the beginning of it. Now there is an armor that the church has, against which the enemies of the church are absolutely and utterly helpless. Now they couldn't see this, but there was round about Peter and John that which was absolutely impenetrable - the filling, the power of the Holy Ghost. Now, here was the thing that was there.

Now, notice it, if you please again, these men were not filled with the Holy Ghost at that particular time. It doesn't say, "And Peter was now given another filling of the Holy Ghost," at all. Peter had been filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, and the Holy Ghost hadn't taken his departure and left Peter half empty or fully empty, so that he needed to be filled all over again. Not at all, not at all. The filling of the Holy Spirit had already happened on the Day of Pentecost. What Peter was doing was yielding himself at that moment to the control of the Holy Spirit who filled him. Now there's the secret of power any place, any time, anywhere. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. The deed was a good deed. The power was resurrection power, is his answer. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead has raised this man from his impotence. It was this power, resurrection power, that was there, and it was in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom ye crucified that God raised him from the dead.

Notice the two points about it again. Here is the old formula of the gospel: Christ died, Christ buried, Christ rose again. That's the old formula of the gospel. And beloved, God has poured all of his power into that. You will notice that when God talks about power through the writers of the New Testament, he doesn't just talk about power. He talks about power that is described by great and marvelous words.

The greatness of his power, the exceeding greatness of his power. God put forth power when he flung the stars into space, but he didn't put this kind of power forth when he did that. This was power to the nth degree. This was all the power that God possessed, if you can say that sort of thing, that lifted our Lord from the grave. Now this was the power that's there. (audio ends)