

Reverend Sidney Edward Cox
Southern Territory School for Officer Training
Atlanta, Georgia
November 21, 1968

Editorial Note: Following the death in August, 1967 of his beloved wife, Violet, who had been a near invalid for many years, Sidney Cox was once again able to travel. Although he was 81 years of age, he was much in demand as a speaker and teacher, and resumed his extensive travel schedule. On this occasion he was invited back by officers of The Salvation Army to Atlanta, where he had served the Southern Territory from 1928 – 1944. It was on this very campus that he had served as Principal from 1937 – 1942. Sidney Cox was a very emotional person, and this occasion, a homecoming of sorts, was particularly emotional for him. J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox

COLONEL TALMADGE¹: Number 240, when you see the words, you won't need the book. "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine; This is my story, this is my song." Let's rise and sing together:

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
 Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.
 Heir of salvation, purchased of God;
 Born of His spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song;
 Praising my Savior all the day long;
 This is my story, this is my song;
 Praising my Savior all the day long."

COLONEL TALMADGE: Last verse:

"Perfect submission, all is at rest;
 I in my Savior am happy and blessed;
 Watching and waiting, looking above;
 Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

This is my story, this is my song;
 Praising my Savior all the day long;

¹ This is Lt. Col. Charles Talmadge who was the Principal of the Training College at this time. He and his wife, Virginia were great friends of the Cox and Wilkins families. Colonel Talmadge was himself a great Salvationist and educator. He later served as the Principal of the Salvation Army Training College – Eastern Territory in New York. He was particularly noted as a one of the great Salvation Army teachers on the doctrine of "Holiness", following the tradition of the noteworthy Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle.

This is my story, this is my song;
Praising my Savior all the day long.”

COLONEL TALMADGE: Cadet Broome, will you lead us in prayer?

CADET BROOME: Our Father, as we begin this morning, we pray that you will be with us just now, guiding us. As we hear the words that you have placed upon Reverend Cox’s heart, we pray that you will guide us through this day that we might know better your will for our lives; to be with us that we might follow the path you have chosen for us to go; listen continually to Thee for guidance. May we always lean on your arms for strength and follow in your will. We pray in Christ Jesus. Amen.

COLONEL TALMADGE: We didn’t anticipate this opportunity until sometime yesterday. And then everything worked out satisfactorily. Through the kindness of Captain Gilliam here, the bishop from Lakewood, arrangements were made for our guest to be with us.

We welcome Reverend Sidney Cox to a familiar setting. He knows his way around this particular campus. If you haven’t heard him, if you haven’t met him, well, you’ve sung songs and choruses with the name of Sidney Cox.

He has blessed countless numbers of Salvationists and others throughout this nation, and I suppose through his songs throughout the world. It’s a real pleasure, privilege to welcome him to this School for Officer Training; which, as you know, Brother Cox, is the best in the country.

SPEAKER: That’s right.

COLONEL TALMADGE: And always has been and always will. Will you greet Reverend Sidney Cox, as I present him to you?

(Applause.)

REVEREND COX: Thank you so much. It’s nice to be with you. It’s always a thrill when an occasional opportunity presents itself to me to be in the presence of cadets and the members of a training college staff.

Last week, Thursday of last week, I was in the training college in Toronto, Ontario. I didn’t know at that time that I would be meeting you. But I’m quite sure, if I had, the cadets there in our neighbor to the North would have sent their warm regards to you. And I expect to be back again there in a little while. And, if you don’t mind, I’d like to take your greetings back to the training college in Toronto.

It’s so nice to see you. It’s a great privilege. It gives me an opportunity to say something that is deeply upon my heart and that is to thank you for singing these songs of mine. The Lord has given me a two-way ministry. Really one, of course, because we all

tell the same old story, whether we are speaking or singing. But, he has given me a ministry in song that I've been so grateful for all the way along.

And folks like you sing my songs and get the message out, in a sense, you take me with you when you sing my songs. Whenever you sing "God's Love is Wonderful," you'd better look around to see whether I'm sitting next to you wherever you may be because I won't be far away. You can be quite sure of that. So it's nice to see you.

I'm taking a photograph of you this morning. You didn't know that, did you? But I am. I'm taking a photograph of you right now, and I'm going to hang it in the gallery of my heart. That, my dear, is what the Apostle Paul used to do.

Out at Lakewood, we've been talking about the great problems that are presented and solved to some extent in the Epistle to the Philippians. And you will find Paul saying in Philippians 1:7, he says to his friends there, as he writes to them, "I have you in my heart." Did you hear that? Not just on my heart; in my heart, see.

I think I can say that about you. We shall be carrying away the memory of you, a fragrant one. And I'm so grateful for it. The thing that's upon my heart and what I want to do this morning in these few minutes together is to talk to you about the second most valuable thing you possess.

The greatest thing, of course, is your Bible. But the second most valuable thing you possess is your songbook. Do you mind if I repeat that? The second most valuable thing you possess is your songbook. And you'd better value it, and you'd better learn how to value it in two ways: by using it and by understanding what is in this songbook of ours.

Because it's amazing who you find in this songbook; not what you find, who you find. There was a person who came to the meeting this morning. Did you see her? She came into the assembly, had difficulty in finding her way in because she was blind. But she came to the meeting, and she comes to the meeting quite frequently. Did you look around and see her? Did you discover that Fanny Crosby was with us this morning? Did you? Well, she was.

When you sang, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine," I expect you folks are just like everybody else I meet, you think about everything in the song but the person who wrote it. And we don't look at the name of the person who wrote it. I find that everywhere.

But she came in and sat down with us. And, here, we sang her song. Isn't it beautiful that you can find Fannie Crosby walking through the pathways of your songbook? Some of the great characters that you can't find anywhere else, you find them.

We say John and Charles Wesley died centuries ago, but they didn't. Because every time you open your songbook, there they are. And you've got them there, and they pour out their heart to us these great and wonderful folks. These powerful voices.

Charles Wesley is the most powerful voice that's heard in the Salvation Army today. We hear more of him. He says greater things than anybody else. And he's the greatest voice that's heard anywhere. And you can find him in your songbook. And you meet him at almost every turn. And you hear songs of tremendous things that flowed out of his heart, and that we've got here.

And we had better value it because, remember, my dear, that songs like Charles Wesley wrote are not now being published in the present day songbooks. And, if they appeared in other songbooks years ago, they are rapidly being eliminated.

Charles Wesley's theology doesn't go down so good in these modern days in which we live. But you hear his voice saying, "Arise my soul, arise. Shake off thy guilty fear." You see. And he just thunders at us. And all the way through you find folks like that. You sure do.

You can meet Herbert Booth at almost every turn here. You certainly can. You won't find him anywhere else. You can't hear a sound of him anywhere else. But in our songbook, he's alive. He sure is. He most certainly is. And you can hear him saying, "Lord, through the blood of the Lamb that was slain cleansing for me."

And one of the reasons why we ought to cling so tightly to our songbook and its content is because, in this book, you will find something about the Lamb of God, and you won't find it anywhere else. Every mention of the Lamb of God is rapidly being dissipated, rapidly moving away. You don't hear it anymore.

In an old handbook of doctrine with which I was quite familiar many, many years ago, there was an illustration. And it said that, on one occasion, somebody asked the founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth: What is the central doctrine of the Salvation Army? And he replied in a characteristic fashion, "The central doctrine of the Salvation Army is the bleeding Lamb."

Did you hear that? Did you hear that? You'll find the bleeding Lamb in here. You sure will. You'll find him here. And many times, you can't find him anywhere else. You can look and look and look, but you find him here. Certainly, you do. You'll find him here. And the Army is still singing, "Glory to the bleeding Lamb."

Don't you see, when you find folks like that, we learn more doctrine from our Salvation Army songbook than from any other book. With all due respect to all the rest of the books that you study on that subject, we learn more doctrine from the Army songbook than from any other book.

It's a valuable thing. And we'd better thank God for it. Thank God for the leading of the law that brought it together and that it is still ours. It's ours. It's ours. Thank God, it's ours. There isn't another songbook in the world to be compared to it, not one; not a songbook in the world.

One of the nice things about cadets is to hear you sing. I've been turned loose for the next few minutes here without any program or anything like that so we can do as we please, and that's what we're going to do. I want you to sing that new chorus of mine so I can carry the memory of it. You know the one, "Just sing me a song about Jesus." Do you know that? Everybody know it? Have you got the music for it there? Fine.

I want you to sing it there. I wrote it in a hospital room in Detroit a couple of years ago or just a little less than that under rather unusual circumstances. I only have to mention that, and some of you will understand what I mean.

But I wrote it in a hospital room there in the city of Detroit a year and a half or more ago, and it came to my heart there. Because there comes a time, my dear, when the only name you want to hear is the name of Jesus. Did you hear it? And it will come to you too.²

The only name that you want to hear is His name. You don't want to hear about other things. You don't want to hear about "Birds on the wing." You don't want to hear about something else. You don't want to hear about a "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere" or something of the kind.

And, by the way, if you're going to a "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere," don't look for me. I'm not going there at all. I know where I'm going, and it isn't a "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere." I'm going to a city that has foundations; that's builder and maker is God, of course. I know where it is and I know the size of it. I know what it's made of. I know what the paving stones are made of. I know what the gates are made of. I'm not going to any "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere." You can go if you want to. But don't look for me when you get there. You won't find me there at all; not at all. Now, sing this little chorus for me; will you? Sing it loud. Come on, let's sing it loud together. Now:

"Just sing me a song about Jesus;
My wonderful, wonderful Jesus;
Others may sing of birds on the wing;
Of flowers that bloom in the brightness of spring;
But if to my heart you would comfort bring;
Just sing me a song about Jesus;
My wonderful, wonderful Jesus."

² Sidney Cox is referring here to the death of his beloved wife, Violet in August, 1967. He loved her in a most remarkable way and often professed his love for her publicly. Upon her death, his family, friends and comrades naturally tried to console him. In his grief, this theme and these thoughts came to his mind, "Just sing me a song about Jesus."

We introduced it for the Bible Conference in July of this year. I thought when I went to Canada and other places that I'd be taking a new chorus with me. But I discovered that it had got there a long way ahead of me. I said I'm going to introduce a new chorus. They said, Oh, we know that one. Somebody brought it here a little while ago, and it's travelling. The Lord gives wings to a chorus like that sometimes. He sure does.

The image shows a handwritten musical manuscript on aged paper. At the top, the title "JUST SING ME A SONG ABOUT JESUS" is written in a decorative, slightly stylized font. Below the title, there are four systems of music, each consisting of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The lyrics are written in capital letters between the staves. The lyrics are: "JUST SING ME A SONG A-BOU T JE-SUS, MY WON-DE-R-FUL, WON-DE-R-FUL JE-SUS. OTHERS MAY SING OF BIRDS ON THE WING, OF FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN THE BRISTLE-NESS OF SPRING, BUT IF TO MY HEART YOU WOULD COM-FORT BRING, JUST SING ME A SONG ABOUT JE-SUS, MY WON-DE-R-FUL, WON-DE-R-FUL JE-SUS." The manuscript includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and clefs, and is marked with several asterisks and red checkmarks.

This is Sidney Cox's original manuscript for the chorus sung above.

Do you know this little chorus of mine that was written 50 years ago this year, a song that most everybody knows there with the words:

“By the pathway of duty flows the river of grace.”

Do you know that one? Now, that's taking you a long way back there; the key of 'g' or 'f'. It doesn't matter which; either one. Now, together:

“By the pathway of duty flows the river of God's grace.
By the pathway of duty flows the river of God's grace.”

I sat in an Officers' Councils in 1908, yes, and I – 1918, excuse me – 1918. And I heard one of the great hearts of the Salvation Army say those words. He coined that phrase: “By the pathway of duty flows the river of God’s grace.” He was one of the great hearts of the Army. One of these men that, if you ever saw him, you would never forget him. He had a face like Commissioner [Samuel Logan] Brengle.

And, of course, he’s fading out into the distance now. He’s just the name that’s given to a conference we hold here or there. But he used to be a personality to many of us. He sure was -- and the fragrance of it.

This man that I’m talking about was like that. I heard him say in his quiet way and remember, “By the pathway of duty there ever flows the river of God’s grace.” I should never forget the way in which he leaned over the pulpit and looked into our faces and said, “And remember, my comrades, the river is as real as the duty.” Shall we let it soak in? “The river is as real as the duty.”

You’re going to be facing some duties today and every other day. Remember, right beside it is the river of grace. And there’s always more grace than problem; always, always. Do you want to know the secret of lifting the burden out of your duty so that it becomes a joy instead of a job? Do you know the difference? You take the duty, my dear, and you dip it into the river of God’s grace. Did you hear it? Take your duty, dip it into the river of God’s grace, and in a moment it will be changed from a job to a joy. It sure will. It sure will.

Now, one of the things that’s deeply upon my heart is the thought that our songs that we sing – and you forgive me for going down this street. I know it’s a little unusual. But the songs that we sing are of value to God only if they are based on the Word of God. When the root of the song goes down into the soil of the Word of God. When that happens, God will use the song; and he doesn’t use any other kind.

They may be interesting. They may have some value to them out in the entertainment field or something like that or encouragement or a pat on the back or something of the kind. But, if God’s going to use it in His central business, it’s got to be based on the word of God.

One of the interesting studies in our songbook is to discover where these songs have their scripture foundation. Into what place in the soil of God’s word does the root of this song go. One of the songs the Army has recently discovered is the song, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” It appeared in *The Musical Salvationist* within the last few months.

We are now discovering it. Other people knew it 50 years ago. But we are now discovering the great song, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” You hear it with increasing frequency in the Army – “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” Where, my dear, in the word of God do you find that song – where?

Now, in case you don't know – you make a mental note of this. Make a mental note of this: You will find that song in the third chapter of that rather strange Old Testament book called the Lamentations of Jeremiah. You'll find it in there. And you read in that third chapter, and you can find almost every line of that lovely beautiful song, "Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see." You can find it almost every line of it.

All the songwriter did was to just take that beautiful fragment of scripture, arrange it in some kind of poetic order, put a musical framework around it, and throw it out into the world, and finally it reaches us. And we sing, "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

Would you mind, instead of bringing you an ordinary Bible message this morning, with it's first, second, and thirdly, and so on -- I could do that, if it was necessary. But I wonder if you would mind if I did something a little different to that. Would you mind if I tell you just a little simple Bible story. Well, I'm going to do it whether you like it or not.

I just want to tell you a Bible story, and you'll like this one because it has to do with a young man and a young woman. They fell in love and they married and they lived happy ever after. Now, if you want a first, second, and thirdly, there it is.

But, you know, way back long before the Lord Jesus came to earth, in a land that was not far away from Palestine, there lived a family. We don't know their name. We haven't been given the family name, but we know something about them. We know that, in those days, the men on the farm looked after the cattle and particularly the sheep.

But the women worked in the fields. In that family, there was a beautiful, young daughter. She was just like any other daughter. There was one thing that she valued, and that was her complexion. But she had to go out into the fields into the blazing sun and work in the fields.

One of the things that distressed her was that the action of the sun on this lovely complexion of hers was turning it darker and darker and darker and darker. It disturbed her heart because she thought it would never be any different. Here I am burned by the sun. Here I am, and I'm losing one of the nice things that's always about a young woman, the loveliness of her complexion. She wondered about it, but she kept on working day after day, of course, out there in the fields.

One day as she was working, she saw a young man walking up the road by the side. He stopped and looked at her, and she looked at him. The next day he came back again, and he looked a little longer this time. She looked a little longer too.

And the next day he came back again. He walked up the road and looked at her. He could see under that sunburned complexion something of exquisite beauty. And he looked and looked. You know what happens, don't you, or do you? Because, if you don't, I do.

When you find a young man looking at a young woman and they keep on looking at each other, something happens, you know. Sure enough, something happened there. And there came a time when these two knew that they loved each other. Here they were. When they talked together, it seemed as if the song of the birds just faded away. It wasn't beautiful in the same way anymore. Here was this loveliness that seemed to flow from one heart into another.

Then one day this young man said to his friend, the girl whom he loved, he said, My dear, I've got to go away, and I shall be away for a long time. I don't know when I'm coming back. But you be on the lookout for me for I'm sure coming back. I'm coming back. Don't let anything ever persuade you that I won't come back. I will. I'm coming back. When I come back, I'm going to claim you as my own. And he went away.

And day after day, she looked down the road and couldn't find anybody. There was no one there. The time went by, and the grave question mark came into her eye, Will he ever come back again? But he had said he would, and she believed it.

One day, to her astonishment, a long time after he had gone away, she looks down the road. She sees something down there that's strange. It looks as if there's a crowd of people down there; dust rising from the road. Then, out of the midst of it, there comes a man riding a horse up the road and crying out, Clear the way, clear the way. The king is coming. The king is coming.

When she looked, sure enough. Here's the procession. And, in the center riding on the kingly horse and clothed in kingly robes, here's the king himself. She stands back to look. As he comes nearer and nearer and nearer, her amazement is almost uncontrollable.

For she can see in the king riding up the road in his kingly robes none other the young man who went away and said, I'm coming back again. And he stopped right there and claimed her for his own and carried her away. These two were married and lived happy ever after.

Now, my dear, what Bible story have I been telling you? Where do you find it? Where? It's in your Bible. It sure is. It sure is. I've been telling you the heart of that lovely sometimes misunderstood book called the Song of Solomon.

Now, you won't read far into the Song of Solomon before you'll discover the girl in the fields disturbed about her complexion. You'll find the young man there. You will find the fact that he's going away. You will find the unity of their hearts that's so beautiful that the most extravagant language sometimes has to be used to describe it. Here it is, this beautiful, lovely, wonderful thing. You'll find it in your book, your Bible, the Song of Solomon.

Now, my dear, we started out talking about our songbook, didn't we? And you will also find that story in your songbook. You certainly will. I want you to sing it. I don't want you to turn to your songbook. You can, if you want to. But I don't think you'll need to. I want you to sing it out of your hearts here.

On all the lists of popular gospel songs, the one that stands at the head of the list, of course, is "The Old Rugged Cross." That's the one that's most frequently used. But the song we're going to sing that is related to our Bible story is the second most popular gospel song that was ever written according to the pollsters. They're not always right, as we discovered just recently. They're not always right, of course.

But the second most popular song – now, you know what song it is, do you? Just give me the chord there, will you? Just give me the opening cord there, and I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to do something I'm not supposed to do anymore. I ought to have more sense, but I'm going to do it just the same.

I'm going to start singing this song. The moment you recognize it you come on and sing it with me. And, remember, we're singing not just a song that an organist in Philadelphia wrote. We're singing the Song of Solomon too. And you notice how this beautiful fragment of God's word has been woven into a lovely song. The next time you sing it you think about the story in the Song of Solomon, will you?

All right. Here's the song – together. Sound that chord again, will you? Fine. That'll do it; all right. Here's the song. You just listen and pick it up and sing it along with me, will you?

"I come to the garden alone;
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear falling on my ear;
The Son of God discloses;
And He walks with me and He talks with me:
And He tells me I am his own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there;
None other has ever known."

Now, you sing that second verse softly because our time is gone -- just about. Sing the second verse softly. Remember the story and remember this, my dear, that while it's a story about somebody, two somebodies, it's really a story about you. For you, my dear, are part of a bride of a bridegroom who has gone away. But He's coming back, and He's coming back for you. Keep it in mind. Keep it in mind.

"He speaks, and the sound of His voice;
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing;
And the melody that He gave to me;
Within my heart is ringing.
And He walks with me and He talks with me;

And He tells me I am His own;
 And the joy we share as we tarry there;
 None other has ever known.”

There was a question I wanted to ask you some time ago, and I omitted it. When we were talking about the song “By the Pathway of Duty”, the man who wrote those words was the second chief of staff of the Army.

Now, will somebody, please, from the history staff, tell me the name of the second chief of the staff. You don’t need to wonder. I ask that question a good many times, and I’m always greeted with a clammy silence. The name of the man was Commissioner T. Henry Howard. In your library, it’s more than likely that you will find one of his fine books by the title “Fuel for Sacred Fires” -- Commissioner T. Henry Howard.

Colonel Talmadge, thank you so much for letting me come this morning.

“And He walks with me and He talks with me;
 And He tells me I am His own;
 And the joy we share as we tarry there;
 None other has ever known.”

COLONEL TALMADGE: And this has been a lovely morning walk through our songbook, including the Song of Solomon. We thank you. We pray God’s blessing, continued blessing, upon your ministry in song and spoken word wherever you have the opportunity.

Let’s stand. I’m going to ask Captain Gilliam to close with a word of prayer.

CAPTAIN GILLIAM: Our Father, God, we pray this day to be equal to our task. We place our duty in the river of your grace. We thank you for your all sufficiency for our lives. In Jesus name. Amen.

(Amen.)