

THE SERMONS, LECTURES AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

Editorial Note: This is one lesson of a 6-lesson weekly series of Bible studies that Sidney Cox delivered to the congregation of the Eastlake Alliance Church in Birmingham, Alabama in 1973.



This is a 2011 picture of what was the Eastlake Alliance Church in 1972. It is located at the intersection of 3rd Avenue North and 85th Street in Birmingham and is the current home of the 46th Street Baptist Church.

In 1972, at age 84, Sidney Cox had moved from Detroit, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama to be near my parents, John and Jean Cox. Still remarkably healthy and independent, he lived in a small efficiency apartment on Birmingham's south side. His beloved wife, Violet had earlier passed away in 1967 while they were residing in Detroit.

From the time of their commissioning in Toronto, Canada in 1910/1912 to 1944, Sidney and Violet Cox had a well-chronicled career as Salvation Army officers – a journey that took them across the breadth of Canada and ultimately to Atlanta, Georgia in 1928 to be part of the founding of The Salvation Army's Southern Territory.

However, during the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a “denomination.” During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Sidney had served as Professor of New Testament at two Bible institutes – The Miami Bible Institute and The Toccoa Falls Bible Institute (Toccoa, Georgia). These two institutes were principally supported by CMA and graduates often entered pastorates at CMA churches.

During this era of his life, Sidney Cox remained in great demand as a preacher, evangelist and Bible teacher both in Salvation Army and CMA venues. The Eastlake Alliance Church was a CMA church and they took advantage of his residency in Birmingham by engaging him to teach this series. The pastor of the church was Glen Tingley, Jr.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

**Epistle of Peter
Part 1
Peter – the man and his credentials
April 8, 1973**

Sunday School at Eastlake Alliance Church, Birmingham, Alabama. Lesson number 040873.

This is Glen Tingley, Jr. welcoming you to this Sunday School class. Our teacher, Dr. Sidney Cox, is beginning a study in 1st Peter.

The chalkboard contains the following information:

“1st Peter, Chapter 1, Verse 1: Five Stopping Places”

1. *The Man.*
2. *Credentials.*
3. *Strangers.*
4. *Scattered.*
5. *Asia Bithinia.*

And now the lesson with Dr. Cox.

The Epistle of Peter. Today, the 1st verse of the 1st chapter. Next time we meet together, Verses 2, 3, 4 and 5 and this is the what I want you to be looking for, *The Seven Marks of the Christian*. You will find the seven identifying marks of the Christian in those Verses 2-5, and it is a very interesting pathway.

Now, in Verse 1 as you will see by the board if you can see it there, our subject this morning is, *Five Stopping Places*. Now here is one verse, only a few words. We’ll read it in a moment. And there are five distinct stopping places and all of them important along this pathway of Verse 1.

Now that’s a discovery that comes to folks like you who are looking with more than casual interest into the Word of God. We’re not content to skim over the surface. We’ll leave that for somebody else, but we want to look into it and found out what’s in it, and here we’ve got a book facing us with Chapter 1, Verse 1, an introduction, and there are 5 distinct places where we ought to stop in that verse. Now, my dear, let’s read it together. 1st Peter, 1st chapter, 1st verse and notice the first stopping places of the five stopping places, and then we’ll come back and talk about them:

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”

And my dear, the five stopping places are not the names of five places because there are five localities mentioned there. They are not the stopping places. They could be quite easily and profitably. We could stop right there and talk about those places, but we're not going to do it except incidentally. That will appear as one of the stopping places. Now let me give you the five of them and we will just go over them.

First, the man who wrote the book - there he stands right at the beginning and I think we've got that on the board; the man who wrote the book.

And second, his identification. He presents his credentials and he says, “I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ.” So we've got two stopping places now: the man who wrote the book and his credentials, his identification.

And then, we've got the folks to whom the letter is written. And the two words that describe them are intensely interesting, “strangers scattered.”

Now you've got 1, 2, 3, 4 stopping places already and when you come to the end of it, I want us to take two of those places, because we are more or less familiar with them and I'll tell you how in a moment or two; and the two places are Asia and Bithynia, just those two names out of the five. We'll stop right there and have a good look at those two places, or we'll look at them anyhow.

So there you've got the pathway of the five stopping places: the man who wrote the book, his identification, his credentials, the people to whom he's writing and he describes them as “strangers scattered” and then the location where some of them at least were living, Asia and Bithynia. Now that's the path we're going to follow this morning and I'm hoping that it will be clear enough to us so that we'll be anxious to talk to somebody else about it and tell them, “We had a class there and we just looked at one verse at the beginning of Peter's 1st letter and we discovered five stopping places.” Tell somebody on the phone tomorrow morning.

Here's a man, now let's look at him. We've got first of all a man and a book, the man who wrote the book. Now, we've got before us one of the most beautiful, fascinating, illuminating books that was ever written. Now I'm talking about it now from the standpoint only of its literary value. Now, a book like this is tremendous. Let us keep in mind that the Bible literature is the crown of all literature, and a man who professes to know literature and doesn't know Bible literature has missed the crown of it all.

One of the things that distresses me is that we live in a world where there is a crowd of people with big heads and little hearts who profess to know literature, but when you ask them a simple question about the Bible they don't know anything about it; and yet there is a sense in which a man is still far from what he ought to be, I almost said an ignoramus, but maybe I hadn't better say that, but he is a long way away from what he ought to be unless he knows the music and value and tremendous content and the prophetic element that's there in the Bible literature.

Now, having said that, we look at a letter that Peter writes and a question mark comes before us immediately. If this was a letter of biblical excellence, literary merit; if it was written by Dr.

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Luke or the Apostle Paul, we wouldn't be so surprised. but we're surprised when we find a thing like this that just drips with milk and honey coming from the pen and the heart and the mind of a man like Peter, because one of the things you notice is the beautiful expressions that you find in this letter.

For instance, seven times, and this is a pathway that's worth following, I've mentioned it before but it's worth repeating, the pathway of the beautiful things that are spoken of as "precious" - seven things you will find in this letter spoken of as "precious." Now that's just a little hint that I'm quite sure most of you didn't need, but follow it through will you? There are seven things that are mentioned in this letter spoken of as being "precious." But, the thing that I'm interested in is the word itself being used by Peter. Can you imagine a man like this? A man like Peter using an expression like "precious." It doesn't fit him at all does it? It just doesn't fit at all. We see a little girl toddling around and we say, "Isn't she precious." We use the word, but you can scarcely expect Peter to use it and yet he does and he uses it more frequently and more beautifully than any other New Testament writer.

Now my dear, here's the question mark. How come that Peter could write a letter like this that as I mentioned a moment ago, it just drips with milk and honey and you can gather flowers that are indescribably beautiful as you walk along the pathway of it? How come, Peter? How come? Where did you learn to write a letter like this? From what source did expressions that are so beautiful, from whence did they come, Peter? This isn't your natural language, Peter. Where did you learn to handle a stylus or something else, the writing instrument, which would be a small delicate thing, wouldn't it? No matter what it was made of, it would be a small delicate thing. Can you imagine it in Peter's hand? Why if you look at Peter's hand, it's still horny and I've sometimes wondered if it didn't still smell of fish. I've sometimes wondered if Peter ever did get rid of the smell of fish because the thing his hand was used to handling was not a stylus. Where did he learn to handle that? Where did these beautiful expressions come from? Where did this literary excellence arise? From what source? A hand that's used to handling fishing boats and fishing nets and ropes and handling fish all the time? He had never handled anything else and neither had his father before him. This was it.

Now, how come that Peter was able to write a letter? Now I'm just suggesting it because when you discover something like that it adds to the value of the letter you're studying. You say, "We'll this is no ordinary letter." When you find a man highly educated, of impeccable character writing a letter and it's a beautiful thing, you're not too surprised. When you find a beautiful thing with this man's name attached to it, then the wonder of it increases doesn't it; and regardless of how we may express it, we get the thought deep in our hearts, somebody bigger than Peter was writing here. Somebody who knew more about literature than Peter would ever know, Peter was incapable of knowing. Where did this beautiful language come from? For instance, where do these seven precious things come from and others that are just sparkling, beautiful, and you find them in this letter, written by a man whose hand, if you take time to look at it, doesn't bear any of the marks of the scribe does it? Not any of it. Where did he learn to write that?

Well, the answer comes flowing out of our hearts. We know from whence this came and because it's so extraordinary, we sit back and take notice and then take notice again. We are so apt to accept the productions of a man like Dr. Luke and Paul, the Apostle, highly educated, we

are apt to accept their excellences without question, but we don't do that with Peter do we? Not at all. Where did this come from? This beautiful language that is here.

Now my dear, if we go back in our thought, you can see what a miracle must have happened in the life of Peter. Peter not only left his fishing boats and nets and became a great preacher, he not only did that, but there were other things there. Peter's language was changed. Now that's one of the most difficult things for the Lord to do when He saves us is to give us a new way of expressing our thoughts. When a Christian talks, the newness of life is seen and heard in the words that he says just as much as in the deeds that he does. One of the enigmas that you see in these days is a Christian talking like the world, and you say when you hear it, "Something's wrong here." You may not be aware of what's wrong but you're conscious that something's wrong. If we talk like the world, something's wrong, there's an area of our life that hasn't been redeemed. But Peter's life was redeemed, and so was Peter's language.

Now if you want to know what Peter's old natural language was, and see how great was the work of grace in the area of his language, all you have to do is to stand by a fire. There's a trial going on in an adjoining room and Peter is warming his hands at a fire, and he finds himself in a corner where in his defense, his natural language gushes out and he denied Him with odes and cursing.¹ That's the language of the fish market. That was Peter's language. Now when you remember that, and remember how long Peter had been using language like that and probably had heard it from his babyhood, then you can see how great a work of grace had gone on in the life of this man in the area of his language.

Now, here's this man and we find him a miracle of grace in this way, a way we scarcely ever think about. We think about a man being redeemed in the area of his moral character or any of a dozen other things, but the way he talks, that isn't too important, or is it? Is it? We'll, we've got the answer right here.

Now my dear, how did that happen? How did it happen, this work of grace? Now again, I want you to go back to the book we've been studying in the 1st chapter of it and the last chapter of the Gospel of John and you will find the answer, the secret to it, the key that unlocks the door that has the question mark on it, you will find that in two private conversations that our Lord Jesus had with Peter. Now, if you want to know at what time at the beginning of the ministry of our Lord and the end of it, two things happened to Peter personally that were tremendous. They were just earthshaking as far as Peter was concerned. Andrew first findeth his own brother Peter and brings him to Jesus and the Lord Jesus takes one good long look at Peter and he says, "You're Simon, you shall be Cephas, which is by interpretation, a rock."²

Now my dear, don't forget this, and this ought to comfort us, that the Lord Jesus can see in every one of us something that other people can't see at all; and the moment He sees something in you or me, He immediately proceeds to make that thing actual and possible. He never sees a possibility in any one of us without giving the grace and wisdom and all that's needed to make that possibility become actual.

¹ Matthew 26:74.

² John 1:42.

Now, he could see something in Peter. Peter had never seen anything like that in his own life. Neither had anybody else. They'd seen a lot of sand, mostly quicksand in Peter, but no rock, you see. No rock. I sometimes wondered what happened when Peter and Andrew went back home that day and told old Daddy Johnson there, because that was his name, Simon Bar Jonah and Jonah is only another name for Johnson, he went back and told old man Johnson what had happened, and he said, "We found the Messiah."

"Oh, you have. Where did you find him?"

"Oh, we found him here."

"What did he say to you?"

"Oh, he changed my name."

"He changed your name? Well, what name did he give you?"

"Well," he said, "I was going to be Cephas, which means a rock."

I wonder if old man Johnson didn't laugh out loud about that because of all of the people that knew there wasn't any rock in Peter, and lots of sand and quicksand at that, it was old man Johnson. He knew that. He had had trouble with this quicksand boy of his all the way along and yet here is this remarkable thing. Our Lord can see things in us that we can't see in ourselves and other people can't see us, and always when he sees it, he gives the grace, the wisdom, the prudence, all that's needed to bring the possibility out and make it actual.

Now that ought to comfort our hearts, because you know and I do that when we look at ourselves there isn't much there to brag about is there? Not with any of us. We haven't got anything to brag about, but what a good thing it is that our Lord can see something in a life as commonplace as yours and mine, something that's worth developing. And He knows exactly how to develop it.

Now, the other private conversation, and by the way, that takes us back to the Gospel of John doesn't it? How many private conversations are there in the Gospel of John? You sat in the class and heard me say that several times. There are 15 private conversations in the Gospel of John where Jesus is talking to one person, just one. Now, that was the situation here. Now we've got two of them in this 1st chapter, and Peter is involved in both of them; or one in the 1st chapter and one in the last. And don't forget that Peter didn't forget either of those conversations. There was something about what the Lord said and how He said it that remained and fastened itself on Peter so that he didn't forget it.

Now my dear, a rock. Before we look at the 2nd interview, let me read something to you - second chapter of this same book. Now don't forget, "You're going to be a rock, I can see rock and stone in you." Now, Peter is writing and he's talking about the temple that God is building and what kind of place it is and he describes it, and here are some of the beautiful words, sparkling words that you find in this letter, written by a man who scarcely ever, up until the time of his conversion, I doubt if Peter had ever handled a stylus like this that would be necessary here.

This is what he said, [1st Peter, Chapter 2] 4th verse:

“To whom coming as unto a living stone disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.”

Now there’s your word again.

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual household, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious,”

There’s the word again.

“And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious,”

There it is again.

“But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.”

And in five verses Peter uses the word the Lord said to him, and he uses it six times in five verses so that evidently it must have made an impression on him, and when he wanted to describe something that was being built, he used the very word that our Lord had said to him.

Now, when you go to the 21st chapter [of the Gospel of John], you find the second of these tremendous personal interviews, and remember, a personal interview with Jesus is always a life-transforming experience.

Do you remember the day dear, when He, our wonderful Lord, took time out to talk to just you? He said something to you and you’ve never been the same. Never been the same. I’ve sometimes wondered whether the reason why so many so called “Christians” of what the foggiest kind of thing that we call “a Christian experience” is because they’ve never yet had a private, personal interview with Jesus. They’ve been so absorbed with what the crowd gets that there’s never been a time when they looked up and listened while He talked to them. That’s always it.

Now there is one time when old Peter heard Jesus talking to him, not a crowd, just to him. Now here’s another case right at the end of the ministry there, you know the circumstances, and our Lord said to Peter, “Feed my sheep and feed my lambs”.

Now dear, when you put sheep and lambs together you’ve got a flock. That is what makes a flock. Now, when Peter in this very letter writes to the elders right at the beginning of the 5th chapter, 2nd verse, he’s talking to the elders, the folks who are going to carry and are carrying the responsibility of the churches and this is what he said to them, exactly the same thing the Lord had said to him, “You feed the flock of God.” Now that’s the business of an elder. Whatever secondary things may clutter around on the edges, the central thing is, “Feed the flock of God.”

Now, he didn’t forget, did he? He didn’t forget. A name was changed. Now that’s very important too because in the scripture, the changing of a name is always a tremendous moment and it marks something in the will of God that is about to be revealed. Abram, A-B-R-A-M and his name is changed to Abraham, A-B-R-A-H-A-M. Do you see what had happened? A-B-R E:\Sidney Cox Library Project\Subject Folders\I Peter. Two Series\1973. Eastlake Alliance Church. B’ham, Alabama\Eastlake Alliance 1973 1 Peter Part 1.docx

and now something happens. And God takes the essential emphasis in His own name, because don't forget that the name of God is always presented in one of two ways, it's either "Yah" on the one side, or "El" on the other, always you see. "Yah." It's the vowel pronunciation of "Jehovah" and here God had taken the essence of his own name and pushed it right into Abraham's name until it became A-B-R-A-H-A-M, and God's emphasis in His name right in the beginning of it. He did the same thing with Jacob. Jacob changed to "Israel" and the two last letters of that changed name indicate God's involvement in it, because always you find that's the way God's name occurs, "El Shaddai," "El Elyon," and so on.

Now this is what happens when God changes a name. He doesn't change the spelling of it, He changes the structure of it and the way He does it is to impart Himself. He takes His own name and thrusts it right into the middle of the name we used to bear.

I don't know what your new name will be in Heaven, I don't know, we're going to have a new name so we sing quite often of it, "There's a new name written down in glory and it's mine." I don't know what it will be, but you can be sure of this: that in some way that will fascinate us for eternity, God will put some mark of His own in that name He gives to you. When He changes your name from what it is to what it's going to be you can be quite sure that involved in that change of name will be something that is of the essence of God Himself.

And so we've got a man whose name was changed, and a man who had private conversations with Jesus, and a man who was so possessed by the spirit of God that miracles could happen in his life, not just outside when a crowd was listening as on the Day of Pentecost, but in the privacy of his own chamber maybe somewhere where Peter writes this letter. The miracle is there. And we've got a miraculous thing.

Now my dear, that's stopping place #1. And let's have a look at stopping place #2 because this man who writes the letter, he gives his credentials, his identification. He says, "I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ."

Now, my dear, what is an apostle? We've been over this dozens of times. Everybody who preaches and everybody or teaches mentions it sooner or later. What is an apostle anyhow? He is the representative of his government or the representative of someone in a foreign land. A teacher stays home, an apostle moves to an area where there are those who do not know the one he is representing. Preacher, he stays home. An apostle, an ambassador, which is another name for it, he moves out and he represents.

Now dear, he represents his government in two ways: one by what he says and the other by what he is. An ambassador and apostle, somebody commissioned by God to go to the far distances and represent His light in the midst of that darkness. That's an apostle. And he not only goes as God's errand boy, as sort of a messenger from God's telegram department, not at all, he's more than that because he not only takes what his government has to say to there but he's the representative in what he is as well as what he says. Don't forget that when the United States government sends an ambassador, a representative, call him what you will, to some what we speak of as a "foreign land," he is more than a messenger boy. He is the representative. Wherever he stands, there is the United States and those folks to whom he goes may have a very foggy notion of what the United States is like or what it stands for, but they not only listen to what he says, they look at what he is, because he has the right to say, "You can look at me if you

want to know what the United States is like. You look at me. You look at the way I behave; this is the way we behave in the United States. Listen to the way I talk. Listen to the way I act.” He’s a personal representative as well as a messenger boy.

Now my dear, here’s a man who dares to say that about the Lord Jesus; and I have to keep reminding myself, this is a class and we’re not here to preach, but even in a class we can do some personal thinking and say, “Could I say that?” Would I dare to say that, that I’m the ambassador of Jesus Christ? I not only go to somebody to recite John 3:16 to them, that’s wonderful, of course it is, but when that somebody looks at me, do they see the reflection of the one in whose stead I stand at that moment? Because if there is anything wrong with the church situation as a whole, and I think there is, but one of the things that’s obviously this: we know what to say under certain circumstances, but what the folks see when they look at us is not always what it should be. We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

Now my dear, I’m going to stop right there because we’ve got five minutes yet before an actual stopping place, but I’ve got the feeling that maybe you were listening long enough and I’ve been chattering long enough about this. All we’ve done today is look at the man who wrote the book and to consider his credentials. Chapter 1, Verse 1, five stopping places and we’ve considered two of them.

Our Father, we pray that Thy blessing may rest upon Thy word. It’s been full of faults, we’ve been conscious of the fact that we have been utterly unable to express all that is there or even a part of it, but we pray that the Holy Spirit Himself may take some little fragment of it and make it worthwhile in our lives so that we do not forget who we are and what we are. We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. Thou hast transformed us and we give Thee thanks. Let thy blessing be upon every one of us we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Thank you very much and God bless you.