

## **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 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and 85<sup>th</sup> Street in Birmingham and is the current home of the 46<sup>th</sup> 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 4  
The Reason for the Valley of Suffering: God's Refining Process  
Chapter 1, Verses 6-9  
July 8, 1973**

*Sunday School at Eastlake Alliance Church, Birmingham, Alabama. Lesson number 070873.*

*This is Glen Tingley, Jr. welcoming you to this Sunday School class. Our teacher, Dr. Sidney Cox, is continuing a study in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter.*

*The chalkboard contains the following information:*

*“1<sup>st</sup> Peter Chapter 1”*

- 1. Stopping places.*
- 2. Seven marks.*
- 3. Manifold testings.*
- 4. Remember - Understand.*
- 5. Through the door.*

*And now Dr. Cox with the lesson.*

First chapter, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter. One of the things I want us to do is to find the pathway leading through this chapter from the beginning of it to the ending of it; because we've been reminding ourselves that 1<sup>st</sup> Peter is a miracle book. Now we've talked about it from several points of view, all of which underscore that word "miracle." Peter could not possibly have written this book of himself. Its beauty, its accuracy, its purpose - it all points to the fact that somebody, and you spell that in capital letters was back of Peter in writing this thing.

Now, one of the things that we need to do, and the Holy Spirit will help us to do it if we trust Him to do it, is to see the pathway of teaching through these various chapters. For instance, there are five sections to the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter. Now we've already done two of them. You'll remember that we started off with the proposition that in Verse 1 of Chapter 1 there were five stopping places, and we looked at them - the five stopping places in the beginning of Chapter 1.

Now, the second thing we noticed and could see inspiration in it is that here before us in this chapter there are the seven marks that God places to distinguish the believer, the one who comes by faith into the family of God - there are seven marks. Now that was the theme for the last two weeks, or the two times that we were together. And we notice we were elect of God. We are

sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We are placed in a position of obedience; and we are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ as a mark of God's ownership; and we are guarded and kept; and there is an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. And one of the marks of the believer is he cares about that inheritance, because you find any number of people who bare the same name that we do who are not at all interested in any other inheritance than the one on which they've got their hands down here and are not particularly interested in the inheritance that's up there. And one of the marks of the believer, the real believer, is: we magnify our inheritance up there and in order to help us to do that the Holy Spirit through Peter describes that inheritance, and he says, "It is incorruptible and undefiled and it fadeth not away and it's reserved in Heaven for you." And in the mean time, as if old Peter is nudging us and saying, "Don't forget what I said to you in that first verse, you are strangers scattered, and you are strangers in a world to which you do not essentially belong. You may be here for a while but you don't belong down here essentially. This is enemy territory and you're down here in the will of God covered by the protection of God to do something that God wants to do through you," and it's just as well to remember while we're at that point that in the plan of redemption there are three parts to it; one is what God does for us and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is what God does in us and the 3<sup>rd</sup> is what God does with us. For us, in us, with us.

Now, we're facing now a thing that is difficult to understand and that is, why it is that God in His wisdom finds it's necessary to put us through a period of testing and sometimes suffering, and whenever you find yourself in the midst of a circumstance like that, it is smeared all over with question marks; and instinctively we say, "Why? Why should this? Why should it? Why should this have come to me," and so on; and we say that. Now in this very remarkable chapter in Section 3; you remember five sections in this chapter, I'll mention the others; but the 1<sup>st</sup> one is the five stopping places, 2<sup>nd</sup> the marks of the believer - seven of them, and now verses 6-8 you find not a parenthesis but an explanation of something that causes difficulty. Why is it that God who has led us step by step until this Mount of Transfiguration is there before us, and we're saying, "We have an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away," and in it, Verse 6, "We greatly rejoice," and we've been climbing up and up and up and up until we stand in the rarefied air of God's illuminating grace to the believer; and then suddenly you find yourself down in the valley, and you're in that valley from Verse 6 through Verse 8.

Now, I want us to look at that because if it was necessary that believers in the time of Peter should know the meaning of testings - you can use temptations if you want to but I think the better word is testings. Why does suffering come? Because it's obvious that right in the middle of that period between Verse 6 and Verse 8, there's something that involves suffering. Now don't forget, God does something for us, He does something in us in order that he might do something with us.

Now we've been looking at what God has done for us. We are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. We've been sanctified, we've been set aside, we've been sprinkled by the blood. We have been given an inheritance. And it's almost unbelievable and yet suddenly we find ourselves facing the God who has done all that for us now wants to do something within us, and you'll find it in verses 6-8.

Now having said that three or four times, let's read together. Verses 6-8, and I want you to notice something: at this point when you begin to go down into the valley, at this high point you

will find the words “greatly rejoice.” Now when you get to Verse 8, you will find that word again, but it’s a word now that has increased in its beauty and magnificence. There’s more joy in Verse 8 than there is in Verse 6. Now you look at it and see, and we rejoice in Verse 8 with joy unspeakable and full of glory. That’s the greatly rejoiced covered over with what God does between Verse 6 and Verse 8. Now let’s look, and we’d better look because one of these days God’s going to take us down into that valley, if He hasn’t already done so, and we need to know why He does it. What’s He doing anyhow? What is the purpose on the other side that makes us more valuable to God than we could ever be if we had missed this period of testing in the center?

Now this is something that we need to know for ourselves, and we need to pass it on to somebody else because one of the things that holds you speechless sometimes is when somebody comes and says, “I can’t understand why God allowed this to come to me,” you see, and what are you going to say? Now we need to know what to say. We need to know why it comes, so that we can, I was going to say endure it but that’s not just the word because enduring it in one realm and enduring for the believer are two different things altogether. Now let’s look at these three verses and let’s see what we can find in them, and we’ve got a few minutes to deal with one of the most essential things. I’d like to do this lesson with a class like this one. Now let’s read it together, Verse 6 [through 8]:

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Now we started in Verse 6 up here. The moment we get into Verse 6 we find ourselves going down, “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold testings.” Now my dear, you stop a minute and go back to what we said about the impossibility of Peter writing a thing like that. Can you imagine, because there are three or four magnificent words, as if somebody has dipped a pen in molten gold when he writes them. These are no ordinary words. Ordinary people don’t use them. “We rejoice for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold testings.” Now, here’s the explanation for it, “If need be for a season ye are in heaviness through manifold testings.”

Now let’s stop and think our way through that. “If need be.” Now don’t forget that that’s God’s word to us. When a testing time comes, you can hear your heavenly Father, if you listen saying, “My child, this is necessary because I want to do something in you so that I can do something with you.” Now there’s the necessity of it. Don’t forget that suffering, testings never come to the believer as a happenstance. Never. They always come in the will of God. Now that’s the first piece of rock you get your feet down on, because if these things are coming to us and they are not in the will of God, what’s the difference between the believer and somebody who isn’t. If it’s just a happenstance, if we can put our feet down on the rock of God’s will, God has released it in His wisdom because something is necessary, “If need be,” and you can translate that, “If it is necessary.” When God sees that it’s necessary for Him to do something in us in order that He might do something with us, then He releases whatever it is that comes.

Now notice again, not only, “If need be, though now for a season.” Now let’s remember again that the will of God accomplishes that which God releases in order to accomplish and it is not

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something that comes without any answer - not something that comes indefinitely, "For a season."

How long is a season? Now don't forget that the very mention of that indicates that God's testing time for us is a limited time. A season is a limited period of time. It isn't eternity, not at all. It's a season. If winter comes, can spring be far behind, and the moment you mention season, that's the way in which we think of it. We know it's a limited time. It comes in the will of God, for the purpose of God and when that purpose has gone, then the testing has gone; and God releases it for a season.

Now, one of the comforting things about it is to find out how long is a season, because the season of suffering sometimes in our finite thinking seems a long time, doesn't it? - the season of suffering. Now, I know what I'm talking about when you talk about that. I know what I'm talking about, not personally at all. Not personally, but I watched somebody, somebody, well let's just leave it there, I watched somebody going through that valley of suffering for 25 years and it seemed almost endless. Now that's the way it seems to us, but God says, "Don't forget my child that I'm going to release this until it accomplishes its purpose and then I'm going to change your 'greatly rejoice' into 'joy unspeakable,'" and this is the way He does it. God doesn't change 'greatly rejoice' into 'joy unspeakable' by giving us things. Not at all. God's method of increasing our joy, and it's the strangest thing, but God's method of doing it is to put us sometimes down into the very valley of suffering in order that He can do something for us down there that He can't do for us up there, and having done that He brings us up to the other point and instead of 'greatly rejoice' it is now, "We rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Something has happened, you see? Now it's for a season.

Now my dear, how long is a season? Now this is the way you think your way through a verse like this. "If need be" - that brings the will of God to it, "For a season" - that limits it until the purpose is accomplished. How long is a season? It may seem to us a long time but don't forget it is only tick on God's clock. It may seem a long time on ours but just one tick on God's clock.

How long is a season? We'll we're talking about afflictions aren't we? Do you remember the word, "This light affliction, which is but for a," how long? A moment, a moment, so that the season now becomes a moment, you see?<sup>1</sup>

Now how long is a moment? We're talking about God doing something in one strike of God's clock. How long is a moment? How long? Well, we don't have to ask your eye doctor for that. I did one time, and I said to my eye doctor - I'm going to see him again, he's in West Virginia and I'm going up there the end of November to his church, but I asked him one time, I said, "Doctor, how long is a moment, because a moment is described as a twinkling of an eye. That's how short it is in God's sight." And he looked at me and smiled and he knew what I was thinking about and he said, "If you're talking naturally, it's 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a second, but if you're talking spiritually it's much less than that because one of these days we're going to find that a moment is the twinkling of an eye." In the twinkling of an eye. Now that's God's clock striking.

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<sup>1</sup> II Corinthians 4:16.

Now can God accomplish anything in a time that seems endless sometimes for us, but in the sight of God it's the twinkling of an eye. He can do it, and He does it for a purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Now the purpose is explained here in the figure. He puts us through a period of suffering or testing, whatever it may be, that is likened to a refiner of gold putting the gold into the influence, the power of the fire. Now why? What is the gold refiner doing when he puts gold into the furnace? What's he doing? He's doing two things. One: he is refining the gold to make it more valuable and more beautiful and at the same time he's removing the dross. Now, if we can see that in a period of suffering; and don't forget, we are the elect of God. These things do not come in any haphazard way, not at all. They come in the will of God, "If need be," and they come in the will of God.

Now, my dear, what is God doing? He is refining the gold in your life and he's taking away the dross, and don't forget that the refiner of gold doesn't spend time refining gold that isn't worth refining. When God puts us through the furnace of refining in order that the gold of our life might be made more beautiful and the dross cleared away, God is paying us the greatest compliment that God can do. He's saying to us, "I can see something in your life that's worth refining. It is gold there. I can see it. You may not, others may not but I can see gold in your life that's worth refining, and if I can get rid of the dross, my, I can work miracles with you."

Now my dear, let's have a look and see again. He puts us through the fire and don't forget that God only refines gold and silver. God never refines hay and wood and stubble. He just burns it up. That's all. Never. There's never any refining. If the refining process comes in the will of God it's because God can see something there that's worth refining, and I want to tell you, my dear, that when that glimpse of it comes and we put our feet down on the rock, we are down on something that is immovable and it does something to your eyesight. We can see the will of God through the refining process.

In Verse 8, we read these words, "Whom having not seen, ye love". Now the ability to see something that can't be seen naturally, the ability to see things supernaturally is very often, not always but very often the result of a refining process.

I've just been reading a remarkable book; it's the story of a Dutch woman who is probably in many ways one of the most remarkable women on the face of the earth right now. She is over 80 years old and this Dutch woman went all the way through the horrors of a war 25 years ago in which millions of people were murdered and tortured and all the rest of it and she was in it and now she's one of God's most radiant witnesses. Now I don't know if any of you have ever heard of her, I only mention it in this way, not to suggest that I'm advocating that you become a disciple of hers, not at all, because I'm not. But the woman's name is Cornelia Ten Boom and she is one of the most remarkable people on the face of the earth, and the thing that has startled me is what God had to do, what God did do in order to bring out the superfine gold of this life. And she can see things and expresses it in her books and in her records and so on in her

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<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1940s, Sidney Cox wrote a chorus that was ultimately widely known and used entitled, *In the Twinkling of an Eye*. It was based upon I Corinthians 15:52. The lyrics are as follows: *We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. When the angel's voice is sounding, and the trumpet is resounding; we shall all be changed in a moment; in the twinkling of an eye.*

addresses things that the ordinary person can't see at all, and sometimes that ability to see with supernatural eyes comes to us because of the process of testing.<sup>3</sup>

In the process of testing, we can see things that we couldn't see before and here's the word about it there, "Whom having not seen, ye love. In whom though now ye see not yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Testing, my dear, does something to your eyesight. Now, Verse 8 again or Verse 9, and I want you to look at this because this brings us to the conclusion of it. God's doing something in us in order that He might do something with us. What's He doing in us, and what does He want to do with us? Just make us nice people? Just make us pleasant folks to have around? Just make us people who can do odd jobs for Him when we feel like it? Is that it? Oh no, not at all. He's got a purpose in mind and the person who is the most effective in this purpose is the one who's gone through the valley of suffering.

Now, what is it? "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Now I want you to look at your Bible there because there are two words in italics that were not there originally, and when you read that verse without those two [words] "even" and "your," leave them out, because here's the truth of it, you receive the end of your faith now tested, now refined and the end of it is "the salvation of souls." Not just the salvation of your soul. Not at all. The salvation of souls.

What is it that God ultimately wants to do with every one of us? Just make us nice church members? Oh no, not at all. He wants us to make us effective soul winners. That's what God is after, and you know the most effective soul winner is the person who knows something about the darkness of the valley of suffering. There comes something to your eyesight that makes you not only see what God is doing through suffering but makes you see the condition of somebody who is outside of Christ.

We don't go after the lost because we have no idea generally speaking, this is a general statement, we do not go after the lost because we have very little idea of what "lost" means. Now one of the things that will happen to your eyesight is that in the valley of suffering there comes to us the ability to see something we could never see any other way. We see the will of God. We see the purpose of God and we see the purpose of God in wanting to save the lost one out there and what He can do with us now the dross is gone. Now that's the purpose of suffering.

Now my dear, our time is almost gone and I'm not going to enlarge on that. I think there's something there for us to ponder, but I want you to see what the next two steps are along this line of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, because we've said there are five steps: One, for five stopping places; 2<sup>nd</sup> the seven marks of the believer; 3<sup>rd</sup> the reason for the valley of suffering and what

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<sup>3</sup> Cornelia "Corrie" ten Boom (Amsterdam, April 15, 1892 – Orange, California, April 15, 1983) was a Dutch Christian Holocaust survivor who helped many Jews escape the Nazis during World War II. In 1970, ten Boom co-wrote her autobiography, *The Hiding Place*, released in 1971 and which was made into a film of the same name two years later starring Jeannette Clift as Corrie.

God is doing by the refining process and what He's got in mind; and then we begin to climb the hill again and the next one is as we go along, the understanding of the path that leads to the door.

Now, that's a rather long explanation but I want you to see that at the end of Chapter 1, the point where we are heading for, and I'll get there one of these days, there's a door and it has two uprights, one is redemption, Verse 18, and the other is regeneration, Verse 23, and there's a door that hangs there and God is refining us so that we can go through the door and then do something on the other side in Chapter 2 that we haven't been asked to do up till now.

What is the ultimate thing that God wants to do with you? Not just to make you an acceptable servant, but in order that we might fulfill His ultimate purpose for us and that is the priesthood of every believer, and you will find we're heading right straight into it. This is all preliminary. I want you to see the path that leads to the door, and then I want you to see, this is Peter talking to us or the Holy Spirit, I want you to see that door. I want you to see the way through it and what lies on the other side.

Now there's the path of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter and you won't mind me saying this to you, that if we grasp that in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, it will be worth the time that we have spent together looking at that one chapter over and over again. It will be worth it because if you want to check this, you find out how many believers who look as nice as we are, as we do, and yet they don't know what's in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, and we do. We do, thank God we do. Glory to God. We can see the steps of it and the pathway of it and we can see it because in that valley of suffering our eyes were opened so that we can see things that can't be seen. Now you see Him and we see with a supernatural eyesight.

Now, you dear nice folks, that's our lesson for this morning and I'm not going to enlarge on it or review it in any way whatever. We'll just have a moment of prayer and then ponder it in our hearts.

Our Father, we thank Thee that in the quietness of this room Thou doest speak to us and give to us glimpses of Thy truth that are almost unbelievable, and we thank Thee. We dare to thank Thee for the suffering that comes sometimes, the suffering we do not understand, but if it comes in the will of God and to the purpose of God how marvelous it is, and in this as in everything else we would give Thee thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.