

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

**Editorial Note: This is one lesson of a 14-lesson weekly series of Bible studies that Sidney Cox delivered to the congregation of the Eastlake Alliance Church in Birmingham, Alabama in late 1972 and early 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.**

**Gospel of John  
Part 11  
Chapter 2 – The Cleansing of the Temple  
March 4, 1973**

*Sunday School at the East Lake Alliance Church Birmingham, Alabama. Lesson Number 030473.*

*This is Glen Tingley, Jr. welcoming you to this Sunday School Class. Our teacher, Dr. Sidney Cox, is continuing a study in the Gospel of John.*

*The chalkboard contains the following information:*

*On the first lines are the words, “The Gospel of John - Chapter 2”*

*On the second line are the words, “Christ, the Cleansing of God”*

*On the third line are the words, “Goodness. Romans 11:22. Severity”*

*On the fourth line are the words, “Three temples”*

*On the fifth line are the words, “Not what, but where”*

*Now let us listen to the lesson with Dr. Cox.*

For several weeks now we shall be looking at some of the particular pictures of our Lord. Now we've done that in general. Now we started out several weeks ago to look at the Gospel of John as something quite different to the other three gospels, and to see if we could get some idea of what must have been in the mind of the Holy Spirit in producing a fourth gospel and why it was delayed so long. What did He have to say 60 years after our Lord went back to heaven that He couldn't say on the Day of Pentecost? What happened in the mean time? What different group of people came into existence for whom the Gospel of John was written?

Now that's been the general thought and we've been traveling all the way through the Gospel of John pausing at Chapter 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and finding out what our Lord is, and as we've been doing it, we've been thinking our way through the gospel.

I hope you folks won't mind if I repeat things occasionally because they are important. One of the loveliest things that could happen as a result of a class like this would be that we help each other to think our way through the Gospel of John so that we can follow the pathway of it and

stop here and there and say hello to Nicodemus and hello to the Woman of Samaria and tell the impotent man by the Pool of Bethesda that we are sorry that he had to wait so long but we are mighty glad that the Lord came on that particular day and so on. It is something that is a real delight and of value to us and it's amazing how the Holy Spirit, when He finds somebody that wants to do it, how he delights to help us. The Holy Spirit helps those who need help and want help and I think He's so glad when He finds folks like us just following the pathway and taking a good look at the Lord Jesus, and then take a deep breath as we look at Him and say, "Isn't He wonderful? Isn't He wonderful?" I think the Holy Spirit is right pleased when He finds some child of God who is doing that because that is what He's doing. He's pointing us to the Lord Jesus and saying, "Isn't He wonderful?" That's His business to take the things of Christ and make them real to us.

Now, not only is it nice to take a fleeting glimpse at our Lord as we move along in the chapters, but it's nice to look at some of them in detail, and I want us to do that this morning in the second chapter. Now the reason why this time that we shall spend looking at the Lord Jesus and what He is in this chapter and that, the reason we didn't start in Chapter 1 was that you will remember, that when we were talking last week about this characteristic of the Gospel of John, that every chapter begins with a dark picture and our subject was, "Through the dark curtains." And, we watched our Lord step through the curtain. Now, we spent a good deal longer, more time in Chapter 1 and looking at him as, "The Word of God" than we did in Chapter 2 where we saw Him at the wedding of Cana of Galilee. You remember, we didn't spend much time there. But the main thought in Chapter 2 is further on down the chapter. This is the picture of our Lord from which we get this title, if you like, of, "The Cleansing of God." The important thing in Chapter 2 is what our Lord did in that tremendous moment when He cleansed the temple. Now that's the subject this morning, "The Cleansing of God" – "Christ, The Cleansing of God."

Now, Chapter 2, if you want to turn to it, I'm going to read the story because it begins at verse 13 and it goes on down to the end of verse 17. Chapter 2:13-17 and this is what he says. Here's the story: "

"And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

You know, it's amazing how accurate the Bible is geographically. When the Bible says, "He went up to Jerusalem," it means exactly what it says. It doesn't mean "down" to Jerusalem. Now if you turn to verse 12, you will find something that is just the opposite of that and you will find, "He went down to Capernaum." Now, the actual fact is that where He was at Capernaum is down, but when he leaves and moves on toward Jerusalem, the mark is up there. "A certain man," we noticed in one of his parables, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departed leaving him out dead."<sup>1</sup>

"Down from Jerusalem to Jericho." And if you look at the map, it is down all the way. While there is no particular importance about the thing we're talking about, it's interesting isn't it to

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:30.

know, especially to these folks who've got their double glasses on looking for little errors or something of the kind in the Word of God, who love to go around like somebody described as "kicking up pins." They just love it, you know. But it's nice to know for us regardless of them, it's nice to know that when this old book says down, that's what it means and it's accurate too. It isn't a matter of, I'm going downtown even when I have to climb hills to get down. That's not the way it's said. It's down all the way.

"And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Now, let's start in perhaps an unexpected place to take a look at this chapter and what it says to us; and you will find a reference on the board that at the first notice, the first word, look at it, it may not seem to have anything to do with the second chapter of John. Now the reference I'm talking about is Romans 11:22; because in Romans 11:22, Paul is saying to his friends to whom he's writing, "Behold the goodness and the severity of God." He's saying to them, when you take a look at God, I don't want you to be so absorbed with what we think of as "the nice side" and overlook the fact that God has to be severe as well as kind. God in His nature must be both kindness and severity.

Now, the connection between that and the second chapter of John, of course, is that here we have two illustrations: one the goodness, the other the severity. One, the turning of water into wine and the other, the cleansing of the temple; and you've got this wonderful word of the apostle Paul, you've got it illustrated in this second chapter of John - the goodness and the severity; and you will find the same thing, those of you who may have been here when we were studying Wednesday night in the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm, will remember that in the first verse of the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm there are two names of God: one is the God who holds us in control, the other is the God who provides, "El Elyon." He holds us like He holds the wind in his fists. He owns us. He controls us. And the other, He provides for us.

Now there are Christians, and I've met lots of them, who like the God who provides but not so much the God who controls; but the fact is, and here we come back to the second chapter of John, we have a God who is just as great in His character when He does the severe thing as when He turns the water into wine; and here is something that is difficult for all of us to learn. I'm older than most of you, in fact all of you I guess, but I wish I could learn the lesson and I wish I'd learned it years ago that there is as much love when God deals in severity as there is when God deals in kindness. There is as much love when God says "no" as when God says "yes." I wish I could've learned that years ago. I sure do. I wish I could learn it now. I wish I knew more about that. There are folks that I meet who sort of instinctively, well they don't face that problem like I do, the "no" with as much love in it as the "yes."

Now, one of the wonderful things about the second chapter of John is that we have these two sides of the character of God illustrated. One, the tenderness and kindness and thoughtfulness and all the rest of it at the wedding at Cana of Galilee, but when you come to this chapter that we're talking about and the picture that's before us, you've got the other side of the character of

God. And one of the difficulties that all of us face is, you can't have one aspect of God without the other. If we're going to have God at all, we're going to have the God who is kind and also the God who is severe.

Now my dear, let's look at this picture. You help me to think into the heart of it because there's something here that's worth thinking about. Here is our Lord doing this tremendous thing. It's the first real picture of our Lord in which you find something that almost resembles anger. I've sometimes wondered what He looked like, what was the look on His face when He went into that outer court of the temple and saw what was going on there. I wonder what was the look on His face when He found something or other that would make that whip of cords; and alone remember, I don't know where His disciples were at that time, but He faced this thing alone; and He went into that temple alone and faced that crowd; and remember, they could've torn Him limb from limb and did that very thing over and over again when somebody offended them in that outer court of the temple. Paul was almost torn limb from limb by that very same crowd and the Roman garrison stationed on the corner of the temple area had to go to his rescue or they would've dragged his dead body out of there.

Now our Lord stepped and not one of them opened their mouths. Not one of them. Afterwards, there was a feeble demonstration, "By whose authority do you do this and what sign do you show that you've got the authority to do this?" You see. And yet here, here is this tremendous thing; and you can see the consternation there and the sheep and the oxen and the doves and the money changers and all the rest of it. What a consternation that must have been. And did you notice that this word tells us that these people watching that thing, their minds went back to the Old Testament as they did over and over again. For instance, when our Lord rode into Jerusalem in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of John on a colt, the foal of an ass, these people not only got excited because He was doing what He was doing, but they got excited because they remembered an old prophecy; and in this moment they remembered something else that had been written years ago, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." It has controlled me. The zeal of thy house.

Now, let's take a look at the picture and ask ourselves one or two questions. Let's think into it. I don't often ask questions. There are some teachers that don't do anything else. They just ask a series of questions and when we say what we think about it. I'm going to ask you some questions this morning. What was wrong with the thing these people were doing? Why did our Lord drive them out? What was wrong with what they were doing? Now they were selling doves. They were selling oxen. They were selling sheep. They were changing money. Now what was wrong with that? The word that's used here is "merchandise." In other words, what's wrong with merchandise? Anything wrong with it? Now you don't need to answer. I'd be glad if you would if you feel like it. But the question is, the big point is, we've got a question to think about. What's wrong with merchandise? Now the associated question is, what was wrong with that particular kind of merchandise? Because the answer to what's wrong with merchandise is, there isn't anything wrong with it. There isn't anything wrong with merchandise. Not at all. There isn't anything wrong with merchandising either. Then, if there isn't anything wrong with merchandising in general, what was wrong with that thing?

Now, let me ask you this, were these people not rendering a community necessary service? Remember, it's the Feast of the Passover and people were coming, Jews were coming from all over the known world. Remember that there were far more Jews outside of Palestine and outside of Jerusalem than there were in it. There were Jews in Damascus and Jews here and Jews there

and Jews everywhere else over the known world and they were required when they came to Palestine at this time, they were required to offer sacrifices. They were under legal obligation. Some of them traveled hundreds of miles to get there. They couldn't bring sheep and oxen with them. Even a little old dove would have been a sorry spectacle by the time they'd traveled with it all those miles. They had to buy these things when they got to Jerusalem. Were these people not rendering them a community service? The folks that came from Damascus for instance would be handling quite a different coinage, quite different currency to what they would need when they bought something in Jerusalem. They had to get their money changed.

If you went to England or went to France or went to Germany, you would have to get your money changed, of course you would. Now, isn't the changer of money doing you a fine service, a necessary service? Of course he is. Then what was wrong with this? Were these people, should they not have been commended instead of condemned. What was wrong with it?

Well the answer, my dear, and the suggestion of it is on the board, and here, you've got the only answer that will satisfy, at least can be used in the circumstances we're facing in the world in which we live and where people are constantly asking, even Christian people are asking, what's wrong with this? Why can't I do this? Somebody else is doing it. Now you've got a principle here, that's the only thing you can use in a circumstance like that. Now, what was wrong with it? Well, my dear, the answer again, there wasn't a thing wrong with what they were doing. Now it is quite possible that in this merchandising place that was going on there were some who were overcharging or shortchanging or something of the kind, but that's not unusual in the rat race that we call the business world. It goes on all the time. That's all the time. They weren't any different to what we are.

Now, what was wrong with it? Why did our Lord do what He did and act as He acted? It wasn't what they were doing; it was where they were doing it. Now that made it wrong. A thing that may be right on the outside of the temple becomes under condemnation when it's brought into the temple. Now that's the principle that's there. Now, what are you going to say to a young person and maybe a Christian young person who comes to you and says, "Why can't I do this? Why can't I go there? Why can't I belong to this?" and so on, and the only answer is, it's not what you do, it's who you are and where this thing is brought when it comes into your life.

There's a little leaflet and the title of it is one of the most useful little things. I wish I had copies of it. I've given away dozens of them, but I haven't got any more left. It's a little leaflet called, "Others May, You May Not." "Others May, You May Not."<sup>2</sup>

When there is something on the outside comes into the sacred area of my life that belongs to Him - it isn't my life, you see. It isn't my life. When something on the outside that may be at least permissible, when it comes into the area of my life, then the thing becomes under the shadow of condemnation and so do I. Now there's the principle. It's not what they were doing, it's where they were doing it, and they distinction comes in the fact that it was being done in the area of the temple.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix

Now if it had been done somewhere else, in the marketplace, or any one of a dozen places, there wouldn't have been any condemnation at all. But the temple, that's something isn't it. The temple was then and it leads us immediately to the fact, and here you've got a suggestion on the board, that just as a temple needed to be cleansed then, so the temple needs to be cleansed and protected now. Now we know what the temple was then, but what about the temple now?

There isn't any temple standing, not now in Jerusalem. There's the Mosque of Omar and other buildings that I would only say masquerade under the title of a temple - better not use that word I guess. But, there isn't any temple there. There will be one of these days. It will be rebuilt, but isn't there now.

Now my dear, there are three temples mentioned in the scripture. Now you tell me about this, will you? What was the first one, can somebody tell me? The first temple that is mentioned. Where was it located, who built it and so on? You see the one I'm talking about? One of the long prayers in the Bible, and the Bible isn't marked by long prayers, nearly all the Bible prayers are short prayers, but there is one long prayer, it sure is long, and it was prayed at the dedication of the first temple. What temple? Say it out loud.

Woman responds: Solomon's temple.

Solomon's temple, exactly. Now that's the first one. And there was a lot of activity that went on in connection with that temple but there was something that no priest, and remember that all the activity in the temple was carried on by the priests. The laymen didn't have anything to do with what went on inside the temple. Not at all. This was the priest. No one outside of the tribe of Levi had anything to do with what went on in the temple.

Now my dear, there was one very necessary thing in connection with that temple. You'll remember that before any priest ever went into that temple, and when he did he did three things. They went into it to do three things. One, to look after the light, the seven-branch candlestick; they went into it to take care of the Table of Showbread; and they stood in their order by the golden altar of prayer and they ministered there in the act of intercession. Now that was the three things the priest did. Now the high priest, he's another person all together, but he went into the Holy of Holies. I'm not talking about the Holy of Holies, I'm talking about the holy place where the three things are. A priest had to look after the light. He had to look after the bread and he exercised the privilege of intercession.

Now, my dear, what did he do before he went in to do any of those things? What did he do?

Woman responds: He washed.

He stopped at the laver outside and washed his hands and feet before he dared to go inside at all, so that the great qualification for looking after the light and the bread and the intercession was not how clever we are or how experienced we are or how much fancied goodness we've piled up, but how clean we are. Now that's the point. The point is that in this illustration in the second chapter of John, something that happened there that became unclean when it was done in the area of the temple.

Now you find that in Solomon's temple.

Now there was another temple that was erected afterwards because the temple in which this very thing happened that we're talking about was not Solomon's temple at all. Solomon's temple had been destroyed and the children of Israel taken into captivity and there they were. They had been taken into captivity and then in the providence of God after they were there for 70 years, God allowed them to come back and only a few came back - just a comparative few under Ezra and Nehemiah, Zerubbabel and the rest of them, and they rebuilt the temple.

Now, what about that temple, that's the second one. It's the temple that was known as Herod's temple in the days when Jesus was there because Herod, the Roman puppet king of the Jews had rebuilt it. How long did it take? How long was Herod working on that temple? How long? It tells us right in that chapter.

Woman responds: 40.

Forty and six years. Forty and six years when our Lord said, "I'll destroy the temple and raise it again in three days," they said, "Why it took 40 and 6 years." But here the same principle applied, the principle of cleanliness. Clean hands, pure heart.

Now, there's a third temple, isn't it? And we look at it and it is told to us in two different ways, and the two descriptions of it are both in Paul's writing to the Corinthian church where he says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God." And in addition, in two chapters, three chapters later he says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of God." The temple of God. Why, my dear, only a priest can operate in a temple, so that in order that God might trust His temple to me, He's got to make something of me hasn't He? What does He make of us? What does He make? And we've got it in Revelation 1:7, isn't it? "He hath made us to become," what? Kings and priests unto God.

Now in this temple, this old reckless thing that you're looking at right now, the temple of God, three things must go on, and if I'm going to be the priest that carries on these three things I must wash at the laver before I dare to do any of them.

Now my dear, what are the three things that are supposed to go on in this temple? Now, I'm saying this temple, you can say your temple if you want to because that's the obvious thing, isn't it? What goes on? What are the three important things? One is the light. We are responsible for keeping the light burning and not only are we responsible for keeping the light burning but in a very real sense we are the light. Remember, you keep the light burning but in addition, you are the light of the world. You are.

Now, what about that light? That's the important thing, isn't it? Because if I neglect that, no matter what the temple may be filled with, it may be filled with things that will come under condemnation unless that light is burning. The big thing I've got to do as the priest in this temple that God owns and that's His, the big thing that I've got to do is to keep that light burning.

Now my dear, I do two things to keep that light burning. We heard this in the sermon last Sunday morning - not in exactly the same words but this was the thought that was there. Two things about keeping that light burning, and my hands have got to be clean before I do either one.

I've got to see that the oil is there and I've got to see that the wick is trimmed, you see. Now it's quite true that back of our human priesthood there stands the priesthood of Christ made real by the Holy Spirit Himself, but it's my business to see that that light is burning and to see that the oil is there and to unhesitatingly trim the wick if it's necessary. Now keeping the oil isn't too bad is it? How do you get along with this trimming the wick business? - especially when the Lord does it? And He does it. So you see what we're doing in this simple little few minutes that we're spending together - we're trying to get down to basics, aren't we? We're trying to see what's underneath the surface.

Now, not only must I keep the lamp burning but I must see that there's bread on the table, the Table of Showbread. That was the priest's business. In the temple, that is this person. "Ye are the temple of God." It is my business to see that bread is available not only for my own use but for the use of somebody else as well. One of the difficulties that we face is to see that the bread is on the table when somebody needs it. I want to tell you that one of the biggest difficulties in the church in general is this: so many people come to the cupboard of the church and knock on the door needing bread and they don't find it. They find amusement, they find religiosity, they find all kinds of substitutes for this, the bread.

We've got three major responsibilities. One has to do with light, the other has to do with bread and the other has to do with intercession; and somebody says, "Ye are the temple of God," and, "You have been made kings and priests unto God," and somebody says, "You do the job I saved you to do and make that the big thing of your life and not the secondary thing." We must have clean hands and pure hearts. God has provided the laver for us. We wash our spiritual hands and faces in the water of the word of God and the word that's there in the original is "the laver" of the Word of God. We wash our spiritual faces in the laver of the Word of God.

Now that's the lesson for this morning.

Our Father, we pray that Thy blessing may rest upon Thy word, not the way it's been said, not the manipulations of which we are all so easily subject; but oh God, we pray that the truth as the Holy Spirit would reveal it may find its rightful place at our hearts and do something for us that only the word can do. In Jesus's name, Amen.

## APPENDIX

### OTHERS MAY, YOU MAY NOT

If God has called you to be really like Christ in all your spirit, He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility and put on you such demands of obedience, that He will not allow you to follow other Christians, and in many ways He will seem to let other good people do things which He will not let you do.

Others can brag on themselves, and their work, on their success, on their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing, and if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.

The Lord will let others be honored and put forward, and keep you hid away in obscurity because He wants to produce some choice fragrant fruit for His glory, which can be produced only in the shade.

Others will be allowed to succeed in making money, but it is likely God will keep you poor because he wants you to have something far better than gold and that is a helpless dependence on Him; that He may have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day - out of an unseen treasury.

God will let others be great, but He will keep you small. He will let others do a great work for Him and get credit for it, but He will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing; and then to make your work still more precious, He will let others get the credit for the work you have done, and this will make your reward ten times greater when He comes.

The Holy Spirit will put strict watch over you, with a jealous love, and will rebuke you for little words and feelings, or for wasting your time, which other Christians never seem distressed over.

So make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign, and has a right to do what He pleases with His own, and He will not explain to you a thousand things which may puzzle you in His dealing with you. He will wrap you up in a jealous love, and let other people say and do many things that you cannot do or say.

Settle it forever, that you are to deal directly with the Holy Spirit, and that He is to have the privilege of tying your tongue, or chaining your hand, or closing your eyes, in ways that others are not dealt with.

Now, when you are so possessed with the Living God that you are, in your secret heart, pleased and delighted over this particular personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of heaven.

G. D. Watson (1845 – 1924)