

## 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 13  
Three Pillars: Father, Faith, Family  
April 15, 1973**

*Sunday School at, East Lake Alliance Church Birmingham, Alabama. Lesson Number 041573.*

*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.*

*On the chalkboard are the words:*

*“The Gospel of John”*

*“Different”*

*“Three Pillars”*

*And now the lesson with Dr. Cox.*

I want to do a review lesson. This will be one more lesson in which we shall start at the beginning of things and travel through the gospel. Now we've done that over and over again. We've watched different people that we've met in the Gospel of John that we do not see anywhere else, and we've looked at this one and this one and this one and this one. We've watched our Lord doing great teaching works in which He attaches His own name to the truth, “I am the light. I am the bread. I am the door. I am the good shepherd.” And all the time we were traveling through the Gospel of John and we've been watching things like this.

One of the things we've been interested is the value of repeated words. We found in the Gospel of John quite a number of words that are repeated so frequently that you come to the conclusion that this is one of the distinctions of the Gospel of John. If I should ask you to mention some of them, I'm not going to, you could do it quite easily. We've laid the emphasis and watched the constant repetition of this word and this word and this word, and we've been through the Gospel of John.

Then we went through the Gospel of John watching and looking and loving I hope what our Lord is in every chapter, and we went all the way through the Gospel of John and we watched in Chapter 1 where He is, “The Word of God,” and in Chapter 2, He's “The Cleansing of God,” and in Chapter 3, “The Salvation of God,” and in Chapter 4, “The Satisfaction of God.” Now we've been all the way through 21 marvelous pictures of our Lord and every one of them shining its own ray of light on the great central face that's in the center of it.

Now dear, the reason I'm mentioning that and finding such unspeakable delight in doing it in a classroom like this with folks like you is because that's something, and you forgive me for saying this, that's something that Mr. Average Christian misses and what a pity when they do. What a loss it is, isn't it, when they fail to see this beautiful distinctive thing and not only see one, but see them over and over and over again.

Now I've mentioned two things to you in that rather long prologue. One is the value of repeated words. When you find yourself looking at a word over and over again, stop long enough to have a good look at it because you're on the track of something. You're on the trail of something that's tremendously important. The other thing is the value of finding pathways through the Gospel of John that will enable you as a personal Christian regardless of anything else to think your way through the Gospel of John so that you can start right at the beginning of it; and in a moment when your thoughts are all confused, and they are in these days, we don't know where we are and we don't know what kind of a world we're living in and some of us don't know what kind of a United States we are living in and we get ourselves all confused. Stop right there in the middle of your confusion and start right in at the beginning of the Gospel of John and think your way through and by the time you get through, my dear, you'll have peace in your heart that passes understanding; and so many of the problems that appear will, if they don't disappear, they will be reduced in size that's for sure; because we may find that God has the answer to them and that God is still on the throne and that God's will is still being worked out and that God's clock is still moving; and one of these days God's clock is going to strike and something is going to happen; and we find this in our hearts when we begin to think our way through the Gospel of John.

Now my dear, I want to mention this as our basis for thought this morning and that is that you find a great central truth when you turn the corner from the Old Testament to the New Testament; you find a great central truth appearing and you can only see it very dimly on the other side of the barrier. Now, what is that great truth? Now don't forget we're studying the Gospel of John and while it may appear for the moment that I'm out there in left field, I'm coming right back to the Gospel of John before long, that's for sure. But I want you to see there's a great central truth in the New Testament that was not revealed in the Old. You get faint glimpses of it. You find yourselves looking at something when a curtain is pulled on one side and before you can catch your breath it is gone again. Now, what is that great central truth that's revealed in the New Testament that you do not see in the Old?

Now the reason why I'm mentioning this is because you see it more clearly in the Gospel of John than you do in any other book in the New Testament - something that's new, something that's taking the place of the old, something that had God's fingerprints upon it, all the way through, something tremendous; and we say to ourselves when we look at it, "Why we haven't seen anything like this before," and we haven't. We've seen wonderful things before. We've seen the will of God working out in a world - people with folks who because of their fallen nature are antagonistic toward God in three different ways: in their love and in their thinking and in their willing, in their actions. They're always against God. However you decorate it, it's always against God, always.

Now into the midst of this, God does certain things. We see Him gathering out a peculiar people and we know who they were, we know where they started, we know who was the beginning of it

there. We know a people there. We know something about them who say, "We have Abraham" to our father; and we see this and it's wonderful; and we see given to those people two great things: one, the commandments and the other, the covenants.

Now my dear, you make a mental note of those two things because you've got the two big thoughts in all of the Old Testament. It's God giving commandments on the one side and God giving covenants on the other. Now when you say that, you've got the heart of the Old Testament, but when you look at it, neither one of these things worked out very good, did they? There wasn't anybody that kept the commandments, not anybody. There wasn't anybody that absorbed the righteousness that is the law and absorbed it flawlessly. There were always fingerprints on it. No matter who you are. You can go to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews and you will find fingerprints on every last one of them even though they did walk by faith and you will find fingerprints on them. And when you talk about the covenants of God to his people that not only affected the people themselves but the land that was promised to them, and there is something wrong when you look at them. What kind of people were they when you go through the Old Testament? What kind of folks were they to whom God gave such wonderful covenants? Why they were up there on a little mountain top one day and down in the midst of the smudge of the valley in the next. And it's all the way along. It was just like that. What about that land that God has given to them? It belongs to them and God has guaranteed it. Do they have it? What's going on in the land that God gave to Abraham, His chosen people? What's going on in it? What kind of a land is it? What kind of people are there? What? And we only have to ask this to see that in spite of all of the wonder that we see in the Old Testament, something is radically wrong with it; and we don't have to fumble around in these little 2 x 4 minds of ours to find out what's wrong because we turn to the Word of God and we find out that commandments and covenants are all weak because of the flesh. They were never able to do what God wanted them to do because of the kind of people that were there. There was something radically wrong with the people.

Now when you turn to the New Testament, you find new commandments, new covenants and not only that, my dear, not only that, you find the great necessity. What's the thing that's going to guarantee that the new covenant and the new commandment will succeed when this one failed, what? If this one failed because of the kind of people that were there then obviously, if the new one is to succeed it will succeed because, listen to it, there's going to be a new people; and you turn the corner from the old to the new and you find yourself facing the unbelievable fact of a new creation. And you find somebody staring you right in the face that's the absolute necessity if that old first birth that caused all the trouble and still does, if that is to be corrected then there must be a second birth to take its place, you see.

Now my dear, in this little room, nothing particularly attractive about the room except you, but in a little room like this we've been thinking about some of the greatest thoughts that can ever enter the human mind and we know where these thoughts came from. We know. We know. And we're studying a book that gives us the answer, God's answer, to what is necessary if the new is to take the place of the old and that the transition is going to be for the glory of God. There isn't much that's for the glory of God on the other side of the fence. Now, something's going to be for the glory of God on this side and it's going to start with a new people, a new group of people that are going to be brought into existence first of all by the new birth.

Now, let's start there. We're looking now into another section of God's revealed truth in which we see new commandments, new covenants and a new creation. Now did you make a note mentally of those three things because if you do, you've got the three things that characterize the New Testament. The New Testament is all about new commandments, new covenants and a new creation. Now, if you made a mental note of that, don't please, say to yourself, "Well, that helped me to remember that. There are three words I can remember: commandments, covenants, creation." Because if you say that and stop there, I'm going to tell you something that you won't like and that is, if it stops there, that's the mark of a second class Christian who just remembers something for themselves. But if you say, "I can now take hold of those three words and I can make this clear to somebody else," if you do that, you move from second class next to first class because the mark of a first class Christian is not understanding something for ourselves but understanding it so that we can pass it on to somebody else. Have you had a kindness shown, pass it on. You see.

"[Have you had a kindness shown? Pass it on.]  
 Twas not meant for thee alone. Pass it on.  
 Let it travel down the years,  
 Let it wipe another's tears,  
 Till in heaven the deed appears. Pass it on."<sup>1</sup>

And I'm hoping that you folks will meet somebody in heaven someday who will say, "Do you remember how you told me about those three words that suddenly appeared in your Sunday School class that morning? You don't know what that did for me. You don't know what a change that brought into my life and understanding, and I was able to pass it on to somebody else." Now you be quite sure that you do that, will you? Because we're going to get a hold of two or three other words, and the reason we're going to get them is not only that we may understand, that we may pass them on to someone else.

Now after that long time, we've had almost a class period before we got to the board at all because when you see three pillars, I'm not talking about the three things we've just mentioned: the covenants and the commandments and the creation. That's wonderful enough, but now we're going to bring them down until we see them personified; because you see it all when the Lord Jesus promised in the long ago, faintly discerned in the long ago, one or two prophets that had a momentary vision of Him; one or two, not many, not many, one or two, there. An then, when you come into the New Testament, you find not only commandments and covenants and creation, but you see somebody there in whom these things all come alive; and the three great pillars of the Gospel of John and of the New Testament for that matter are just these, three words and they're easy to remember and don't forget why you're going to remember them. You're going to remember them not only because you're going to remember them, but you're going to remember them so you can pass them on to somebody else.

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<sup>1</sup> First verse of the hymn by Dr. Henry Burton, *Pass It On*.

Now here are the three pillars: father, faith and family. Now listen, I've said that to you before but now we're going to stop long enough to have a good long look at that because here you've got the three pillars that hold up the tapestry of the Gospel of John. Now perhaps you can see why this amateur artist that you've got for an old teacher here did this kind of thing. You've got the three pillars and something hangs on them there and it's the tapestry of the Gospel of John; and my dear, the most skillful weaver that was ever manifest is the Holy Spirit himself; and He has taken the necessary threads and colored them with the blood of God's only Son and presents to us a picture so beautiful that nothing on earth has ever come anywhere near it; and we've got three great facts personified: father, faith, family.

Now dear, here's a little bit of review again because remember what I said about repeated words. Now we're going to look at repeated words and we've looked at them before; and I'm quite sure that if I asked you the question, how many times do you find the word "Father" with a capital F in the Gospel of John, you could tell me because we find it 121 times in this one book; Father, Father. Now stop. You turn to the other side of the great divide and you look at this unsatisfactory era on the other side; 4,000 years according to the Ussher Chronology, not according to the chronology of some college professor, of course, and he's probably right.<sup>2</sup> But any how, we're looking over there at this time and it's so unsatisfactory and one of the reasons is that the word "Father" on the other side means entirely different from what it was on this side.

The word "Father" my dear, in the Old Testament is not the same word and it doesn't mean the same thing that it does in the New Testament. Now let's remember this, that when you turn the corner into this new area where you find new covenants and new commandments and a new creation; when you come into that you find that the word F-A-T-H-E-R has a different meaning all together and you can't find scarcely a glimpse of it in the Old Testament at all. You can find God there, of course. You find God the Creator. You find God the Provider. You find God who takes care of His own. You find God overshadowing His people, why of course. You find all of these things there but "Father," that's something else isn't it?

Because, don't forget, even God can't be Father without children. Did you hear that? Even God can't be Father. You can find God as everything under the sun. You can find God who creates this and creates that and holds them together by His power and His love and His grace, and you can find it all but you won't find one single sign of God begetting children in the same way in His realm as an earthly Father begets children in his realm. Now He's had another name all together now. We've got something else we've been looking at and it is so important that you find it mentioned over and over and over again as if the Holy Spirit is saying to us almost desperately, "I want you to see this aspect of God. I want you to see God not only creating

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<sup>2</sup> The Ussher chronology is a 17th-century chronology of the history of the world formulated from a literal reading of the Bible by James Ussher, the Anglican Archbishop of Armagh (in what is now Northern Ireland). The chronology is sometimes associated with Young Earth Creationism, which holds that the universe was created only a few millennia ago.

things but God bringing things into existence by the impartation of His own life. Now that's a truth you won't find there but you will find it and it glows with neon lights when you turn to the New Testament and you can see it there. God, God, God. Nobody in the Old Testament ever looked and said, "I'm a child of the King". It's all said, "I belong to the King. I'm a servant of the King. I'm this and that and the other of the King." But nobody had ever stood and said as you do, "My Father is rich in houses and lands." Nobody ever said it, nobody. Nobody ever said, "I was born into the family of God," because birth implies an act on the part of God that you won't find on the other side because God is now producing something that's entirely new. We saw how God produced the old by His creative genius and so on. We find that, but now we come to the New Testament and we find God is bringing forth by His own sovereign act and by the depositing of a seed that has His nature in it, He is bringing forth new children into a new family circle who will be able to do what the old folks were not able to do with the new commandments and the new covenants and it's a new creation altogether.

Now my dear, where do you find the great truth about the beginning of a new creation, and we're not talking about physical creation at all. I suppose it would be possible for God to create stars He hasn't already created if He wanted to. It wouldn't be beyond His power but that's not what we're talking about at all. Here's a new creation, a different people all together. You can't find them there. Here's a new creation. Oh, they belong to God. Whatever God creates He holds, He claims, but here's something else; and you find appearing people who have been born into the family of God; and born into the family means we share our Father's life, not just our Father's creative ability. Our Father is now imparting to us His own life.

What is it that gives you as a personal Christian your ultimate dignity, if you've got any? What is it that gives it? Your ability to do something? Oh no, no, no. Not at all. The thing that marks us is, God in His sovereign grace has imparted to me through the seed of the word planted in the womb of my heart a new life all together and I'm a born son of God, you see. Now that's the essence of fatherhood. The essence of fatherhood is not just a father providing for his children, it's a father producing the children. That's the ultimate. That's the ultimate. Not just providing for them, you see. Not just recognizing them, but you will find this is it.

Now you've gotten more about the Father who is bringing into existence a new creation and you will find the words, it's like a symphony orchestra and you can hear the sound of it all the way through. The moment you turn into the New Testament, this is the sound you hear - Heaven's symphony orchestra is playing the great symphony of the new creation, you see. Earthly writers can talk about the old one and write about it, but the Holy Spirit talks about the new creation and that's the reason, my dear, why you find the word "Father" repeated so often. It's because it's the important word. God is my Father, not just because He provides certain things. He is aware of the fact that I need food and clothing, of course He is, of course He is. But that isn't what makes God my Father. When I look at my father or when I used to, and I was not merely looking at somebody who by the sweat of his brow put bread on our table. He did that, that's for sure, but I was looking at somebody whose life I share, and it came to me through the mystery of the new birth.

Now the moment you turn into the Gospel of John you've got that and you've got it in a way you won't find it anywhere else. You find implications of it but here you find the explanation, not just the implication, you find the explanation of it; and we're the children of God.

Now my dear, how can that new life of God ever come to us? What is the channel by which God transmits His life in such a way that there comes a moment when you step into the realm of His family circle and share His life with Him? Now what's the way? Turn back again now. Remember what we're doing. Turn back again and you will find commandments and covenants, and they all center in what we do to bring ourselves into favor with God. But here we are doing things not because we want to be brought into favor with God, but because of our position in His family, we have been brought into favor with God. You see the difference? Now that was the old. This is the new. And the pathway is not the path of works, it's the path of faith. Now all we do is to believe what God says and act accordingly, and that's the definition of faith. If somebody says to you, "What is faith anyhow?" You can tell them it's believing what God says and acting accordingly. That's faith, and everything that God has for us comes down the avenue of faith because that means God does it all and we don't. That's what it means.

Now my dear, that's another pillar isn't it? Because we've got the one, 121 times, well when you turn to the Gospel of John you will find "faith" or "belief" or the equivalent of it, 98 times again; and again, you could've told me that because we've said it over and over again, but let me remind you, you turn to any other book in the scripture and you won't find the word "belief" and "faith" as the means by which God transmits His life to us. You won't find it in the same way. Here's a book that's different, and five months ago we started out with that word "different" and we've been hammering away at it ever since and here it is again and we've got father and faith and family. Now that's the final word there and you see how the three things all come together. By faith in the Son I'm made a member of the family of the Father and we've got Father, faith and family. And you will find in the Gospel of John more about the family of God that begins with birth, you will find more about it than any other book in the scripture.

Now we've got our three pillars and it's so easy to remember them, but don't forget why you're going to remember them, not just you're going to say to yourself and pat yourself on the back and say, "Well even I can remember those three words, Father, faith and family, that's easy. But don't forget, God's going to hold you responsible for giving that away to somebody. That's the mark. That's the mark.

Now, in about five minutes I want to remind you of the three great things that God does for those that are in His family circle and you will scarcely find, in fact you won't find any sign of any one of them on the other side. Now, my dear, three things. Let's remember them. The first one: the peculiar love that God gives to His children. Now let me remind you that you will find God's love all the way through. God overshadowing by His love, but it is a new creation. These children have been brought into the family by sovereign act of God. There's a new love now and it's directed toward, shall I say it, you, you my dear; and God looks at you with a love that you won't find on the other side. Of course He sends the rain on the just and on the unjust. He sends a beautiful day like this when the tulips are out and all the rest of the stuff. Of course, of course, but that isn't the way that God's looking at you. He's looking at you and he's so proud of you

and He's saying, "She's mine. He's mine. He's mine." There is a peculiar love that God gives and it's revealed on this side and you can only find glimpses of it on the other.

Let me give you scripture for it, I John 3:1: "Behold," now don't forget that that word is a word addressed to those who are coming to the family of God and one of the things that marks you when you come into the family of God is, you can see things that you couldn't see before. Now that's what "behold" means. It means, I'm talking to my children and asking them to look at something that would be dim and foggy and all the rest of it to everybody else. They couldn't see only the dim outlines of it. You can see it clearly. "Behold," what? "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." What kind of love? What kind of love?

A great Bible commentator, probably the wisest and the best educated Christian man that I know anything about is a professor in the University of Auckland down in New Zealand and he's one of the great English Keswick speakers. His name is Professor E.M. Blaiklock and if you want a good little book on 1<sup>st</sup> John you get his book and it's called "Faith is the Victory" and if you can't get it at the Book Nook or somewhere else you just mark it up, the Book Nook has failed right at that point. And it doesn't cost you much either. But he said this, that those words "what manner of" can be translated into one word like this, "unearthly." "Incredible." And we say, "Behold, what unearthly love is this? What incredible love is this that we should be called the Sons of God." And you've got the new revelation there and you've got something that's quite different there.

Now, the other thing that you can only find dimly suggested on the other side is this, and it belongs to you, the intercessory work of Christ at the right hand of the Father is the second of God's great gifts to His children - the prayer life, the intercessory work at the right hand of the Father. "We have a great High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us,"<sup>3</sup> and somebody on the other side can never say as we can say on this side, "Our Savior, my Savior prayed for me today. Today, He mentioned me by name." And the other thing is the great incorruptible inheritance that He's leaving for us. The peculiar love, the inheritance and the intercessory work of Him who said, "I pray not for the world but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world."<sup>4</sup>

Now we started off this morning talking about 3 pillars.....(audio ends).

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 7:25.

<sup>4</sup> John 17:9.