

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 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.

**Gospel of John
Part 14**

**“I Am the Vine, Ye Are the Branches” – Born To Reproduce
April 22, 1973**

This is Glen Tingley, Jr. welcoming you to this study. Our teacher, Dr. Sidney Cox, is concluding a study in the Gospel of John.

The chalkboard contains the following information:

“The Gospel of John”

“Different”

“Christ the Fruit of God”

“John 15”

And now to the lesson with Dr. Cox.

Now my dear, we’re going right on with our lesson in the Gospel of John and we’re going to link on first of all with what we did last week. I want us to remember that we have been approaching it from one point of view and that is that the Gospel of John is different to the other gospels and not a repetition of Matthew and Mark and Luke. It was written as we have reminded each other, at a different time for a different purpose and to a different people, and we shall be talking about the different people. As a matter of fact, we shall be not only talking about the different people but we were talking about them last week. We were talking about the different people to whom the Gospel of John was written especially, and you’ll find them in the Word of God in the New Testament; you won’t find them in the Old Testament at all, but you’ll find them in the New Testament under various names: one: the family of God; and two: the body of Christ; and the third, which is a common place, our Lord Himself used it; it is the church, which is His body. “On this rock I will build my church.” And, if He’d meant He was going to build it on Peter, then it wouldn’t have been rock at all, it would have been quicksand; because Peter was just exactly the same as the rest of it. It was on the immovable rock of God’s immovable word and we’ve got three things: the family of God, the body of Christ and the church, which is His body.

Now there are the three terms that are used; and we have been giving thought to it and concentrating particularly on the 1st one - the family of God; and the reason for that is that in the Gospel of John you find family terms. Family explanations as you do not find elsewhere. For instance, you won’t find the words “born again” anywhere else except in the writings of John except one incidental reference, and we’ve reminded each other of that where Peter is the only

one who ever uses the words “born again” apart from John. Of the 14 times they occur in the New Testament, 13 of them are in the writings of John, and so a family begins with birth. That’s the commencement of it.

But my dear, a family doesn’t stop there does it? That’s only the beginning of it. It’s wonderful. When you have a family, you have father and mother and children. But that’s only the beginning of something, and so we find it in this revelation of God’s truth about the family of God, we find that coming into the family of God, being born into the family of God is not the end of something, it’s only the beginning of something and there are two things that inevitably happen in a family. Visualize it, any family you care to think about: father, mother, two or three children, there’s the family and the thing that makes them a family is not the house in which they live, or the food that they eat, or the taxes they pay or anything about it. It is that they share a common life. Father, mother, children; in the mystery of God’s arrangement, they share a common life. That’s the reason why father and mother can say these are our children because they share a common life.

Now, two things happen, and don’t forget that the family on earth, the family we’re talking about is but an illustration of the family that God’s interested in, the family that God is producing. The family that is being gathered out by the Holy Spirit, Acts 14, in which He tells us that His great business is to gather out a people for His name. Now a name is not just a label on the outside. A name is a life on the inside and He’s gathering out a people for His name. Now that’s God’s great purpose in this dispensation that we call, “The Age of Grace.”

Now my dear, a family circle, coming back to the natural family as the illustration, a family circle doesn’t end when there is father and mother and two or three children even sharing the same common life; that isn’t the end of it, is it? That’s only the beginning of something. There is something that goes on and on and on because after a while, and I’ve been through this just like you have, after a while a very wonderful thing happens and we go around and we show a little picture to our friends and we say, “This is my first granddaughter.” Now you see what happened is that the children in the family became the center of a family of their own, but the remarkable thing about it, or the essential thing about it is, there is the same life. Why is it my dear, that you can say of a certain little old baby that looks exactly like any other baby, but it isn’t of course, because it happens to be your granddaughter or grandson and there is never another like that, of course.

But what is it that gives you the right to say, “This is my granddaughter,” just a legal arrangement, oh no, no. It’s the same thing that gives you as father and mother the same right to say of that daughter of yours or that son-in-law, that son of yours, he’s mine. It’s the family life that’s going on and on and on and on; and my dear, the great purpose of a family, and I want you to remember we’re not talking just about a natural family, we’re talking about God’s family too of which the natural family is but an illustration. The great business of a natural family is not merely to live together and to work together and to behave together and not merely to love each other. There is something that is the ultimate purpose. Every family is ultimately to reproduce itself. Now, that’s what happened when you take that picture out of your wallet and say to your friends here and there, “Here’s a picture of my granddaughter.” A family reproducing itself. A few years before it was father, mother, children. Now it’s far more than that: it’s father and mother and children, and father and mother and children, and father and mother and children, if you live long enough to have a great-granddaughter. It’s this continuation of things. Now, my

dear, that's what God's after because the family circle of God that began on the Day of Pentecost, and has been going on ever since, the big business of the family of God is not merely to behave itself along certain lines, but to reproduce itself.

Now my dear, let me remind you of one of the basic truths that is so easily overlooked, and that is when God saved you, He didn't save you in order to have one more pleasant person in His family circle who would do odd jobs for Him and be a nice, well behaved child in God's family circle. He wanted that, of course, but there was something far greater than that. He brought you into the family circle in order that the life He deposited in you, His life that makes you His, He deposited that life in you, and our biggest responsibility is to pass on the life God deposited in us so that it reproduces itself in another. Now I don't know whether that's a complicated pathway or not, but we'll either get that or we'll be strangely lacking in our understanding of what the Christian life is all about. A Christian life, my dear, is not one that is occupied by doing pleasant deeds. The beginning and the ending of the Christian life is not, "To do unto others as you would that they should do unto you," that's a part of it of course, not at all. That isn't the end of it. The end of it is that your life might be used of God to reproduce itself in another life. Now that's God's way, and so from one little section of the Christian family another section, another and another and another is reproduced.

How was it, dear, that you ever heard the sound of the gospel? Now one day you heard the sound of the gospel and because of what the Holy Spirit was doing in your heart, but would have never happened any other way, you believe the gospel and you believed it savingly, not just intellectually. You believed it savingly, and something happened and a new life was reproduced in you and you became a new creation; and all things passed away and it all happened because somebody dropped the word, the seed of the word, the truth of the word and it came by hearing and hearing produced that which the Holy Spirit could use to bring you to newness of life. Now how did that happen? In other words, where did the one who told you about Jesus, who told him about Jesus? And, who told that one about Jesus, and who told that one about Jesus? Because somebody did and you can go right on back from where you are - a saved child of God in the family of God because somebody brought the life-giving word of God to you; and you can go right back step by step by step until you get right back to the first impartation of God's new life because of Calvary on that Day of Pentecost, when 3,000 were brought in to the family of God.

Now that's the way it happened, and what the Holy Spirit is doing by this process, the process of reproducing ourselves, what He's doing is completing the Body of Christ, and when the complete family circle has been gathered in, then He who is the head will come and claim the body for His own, or if you want to change the figure, He will come to claim the church as His own, or if you want to get a little more intimate, He will come to claim the bride as His own. Now that's what He's waiting for. That's what He died for. That's the message of Easter when you get to the finality of it. Easter is not just a time of rejoicing. Easter is a time when we're reminded that the life He gave on the cross is now imparted to us by the mystery of the word of God that is now available to us, and in which life is there, and this is coming to us and our body is being completed and, my dear, we are all involved in it whether we like it or not.

Now when we say that unless this grips our hearts we shall fall short of our understanding of what the Christian life is all about, and why it was given to us as God's gift in the first place; unless we understand that, we shall fall short of the real purpose that God had in mind in saving us. He can get other people. He could employ angels to do everything you do, my dear, as a

recognized Christian, there is somebody, and generally speaking, what we do could be just as well done by an unsaved religionist as it is by us. I wonder how many Sunday School classes are being taught this morning in Birmingham by unsaved Christians. Oh, they look alright, you see, they look alright. I wonder how many sermons will be preached in the United States today by unsaved preachers. I wonder. I wonder how many good deeds will be done by unsaved folks. They can do everything that we do but one thing, just one thing, and the thing we're talking about is the one thing that can only be done by a child of God, and that is that the life that makes us a child of God is transmitted by the Holy Spirit's method from your life to another life. The unsaved Christian can never reproduce himself in a saved life, but you can. Now that's the only thing that we can do that other people can't do. They can do everything and in the main, they do it. They can give money to foreign missions. They can pray. They can talk. They can do everything. They can bake doughnuts. They can do everything. They can paint buildings. They can do everything but one thing, but one thing, reproduce the life of God in another.

Now my dear, if that's so, then that's the vital thing, isn't it? It isn't how much we have given or how much we have done. It's has your life reproduced itself in another life. That dear, is the acid test. That's the acid test. Not outward things, but has the life that God entrusted to you, has it been used of the Holy Spirit to touch another life into newness of life so that in that other life, there is the same life that God gave to you when He saved you. Now the great purpose of God in saving you, my dear, is that you should do 1,000 things, but ultimately this is it; reproduce yourself.

Now, we say that and I've taken going on for 20 minutes just talking about that, and I suppose if you've looked at the board, you've wondered, when in the name of heaven is he coming back to what's on the board. Well, I'm coming back now to it because the illustration in the 15th chapter of John is exactly the thing we've been talking about.

Now when you turn to the 15th chapter of John, you've got a very beautiful parable, and our Lord Himself not only taught it, He personified it, because it's one of these parables in which our Lord says, "I am something," and you'll remember how He starts it off. "I am the vine. Ye are the branches. I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman." That is the opening words of it. And when He says that, He intimates that there is a false vine. Otherwise, He would have just said, "I am the vine." But He said, "I am the true vine." There's a false vine. He's the true vine. Now, He not only says that, but He says I am this. He not only says, "There is a true vine," but He says, "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman," and all the way down there in this indescribably beautiful thing, you won't find anything like the 15th chapter of John outside of the Bible no matter where you turn. Nobody could ever have written the 15th chapter of John except somebody under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. You can get the greatest literary minds you want to and not one of them or all of them piled together could ever have written the majestic thing that we call the 15th chapter of John and there is a great central point to it.

Of course, there are a lot of stopping places along the road. For instance, there is the great lesson of abiding. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what you will," and that's the second lesson isn't it.¹ It's not really a matter of abiding, but there's the great lesson of

¹ John 15:7.

asking and receiving: and there's blessing indescribable on the road to something, but don't forget that the ultimate purpose of a vine is not merely to grow a pleasant product that finds itself in some form or other on your table. Now that's a sideline. That's a fringe benefit. But the great business of the vine, my dear, is not to produce something that you like to see on your table and your friends like to eat, not at all. The great business of the vine, the ultimate purpose of the vine, is to reproduce itself.

Now, if there was not this matter of reproduction wrapped up in this picture of the vine, what would happen when the vine had brought forth its annual fruitage and it had been gathered and you had made it into jam or something of the kind, and what's going to happen to the vine? Because next year there's got to be another vine, and the year after that there's got to be another one. The ultimate purpose of the vine is not really to produce pleasant side products, but the ultimate thing is, the vine reproduces itself.

Now you know and we've mentioned this before, what would happen if the vine was left alone? If the grape growers just left it alone? It would produce its grapes, the grapes would ripen, and the little packages wrapped up in the grape would fall to the ground and there in the course of time, the wind would come and the rain would come and you go back six months later and you find a little green shoot going down, and another one coming up, and you see what is the ultimate product of the grapevine. The ultimate product is not grapes; it's another grapevine.

Now you see how the illustration parallels exactly what we have been seeking to express in the previous 20 minutes or so. The ultimate purpose of a grapevine is to reproduce itself, but we say in these days, we know how to produce grapevines without waiting for a grape to drop to the ground and the seed. We don't produce grapevines by seed any more, we produce grapevines by cuttings. But let me ask you my dear, what is the essential difference between a seed that reproduces and a cutting that reproduces - there isn't any real difference at all. Each one is a vital part of the original grapevine. That's the thing that's there. And we've got this business of the matter of reproduction.

Our lives were given to us, my dear, not merely that we might live even an adequate Christian life, but that your life and mine would reproduce itself. Now that's the illustration outside. And one of the things that we're so apt to, I was going to say get astray on, let's leave it that way because that isn't correct, you'll understand. But one of the things where we're so apt to go astray is that the ultimate purpose of the Christian life is living the Christian life. Now the next time you go to a funeral service of some Christian brother or sister and you hear what is said, and you will hear the loveliness of the Christian life, the beauty of the example, the unselfishness and all that, but when was the last time you ever went to a funeral service of a Christian, you wouldn't hear it anywhere else of course, the funeral service of a Christian in which the final part of the eulogy was, "He was the one who led me to Jesus." When was the last time you heard that?

If it was your funeral service, would they say that about you? Would they? Now you forgive me for saying that because, my dear, I'm not really saying that to you at all, I'm saying that to me. This is the one I'm talking about. Now, we've got an illustration of the absolute necessity of reproducing ourselves. This is God's plan - that your life, becoming a member of the family of God should in turn become the center of another part of the family of God, and yours and yours

and it goes on and on until finally the body is completed and the Holy Spirit has finished His work. Now that's the ultimate test. That's the final thing.

Now my dear, let me give you an illustration that isn't in the Bible. I went into the office workshop, because it was a combination of both of a man a little while ago who was and is the engineer of a great hospital. He was the man who kept everything running, and I knew him quite well - worked with him in revival meetings and knew his family and I knew him quite well. So I didn't feel a stranger when I walked into this place, and I looked around and here were all the tools of his trade here and there: but I looked down on his desk and there on his desk was his New Testament. Now, he saw me looking at it. And he said, "I keep it there. I don't draw attention to it, but you would be surprised how many folks coming into this room as you have done notice my New Testament on the desk, and they not only notice it, they speak about it too, and every time they do it opens the door for me to give my personal witness as to what Christ meant to me and what He has done for me." And then he said this, and I felt I ought to take my shoes off when he said it. He said, "Would you believe it, that standing right there attracted by that New Testament, asking the questions that gave me the right to ask other questions, standing right there in the years that I've been in this place, 32 people have stood right where you stand and have received Christ as Savior and Lord, 32 people." See.

Now, I could look at that life and I could see in abundance everything else. I could find abiding. I could find asking and receiving. I could find blessings of all kinds in that life and I knew, I knew, but the ultimate thing it is was this, 42 people, or 32 people have stood right where you're standing and have received Christ as Savior and Lord, and they did it because I left my testament there in the open on my desk and the Holy Spirit used it to open the door.

Now my dear, there's the ultimate thing. If I should go to his funeral service, what do you think they'd say about him? What? Oh, they'd say a lot of other things, but some of those 32 people would be at that service, and whether the man leading it or not said it, they would say it, "He was the one who led me to Jesus," see. Now that's the ultimate. And my dear, if I don't get a chance to say it to you again, let me say it this, don't let settle for anything less than that. Let's not settle for God's second best, because, "God will use anybody who is usable in this, and if we're not being used to reproduce ourselves, we might just well be honest with ourselves and say, "It's because something makes us unusable."

The vine and the branches. I was conducting a youth revival some little time ago, and a great many young folks were coming to receive Christ and dedicate their lives to Christian service and so on, or a lot of them. And I noticed one boy in particular. He would go back in the audience and there while the invitation hymn was being sung, I noticed he brought somebody forward to the altar of prayer. And in a little while, he went back and I saw him bring another. And I saw him looking at me as I was standing on the platform, and I had a feeling he wanted to say something to me. So I said, "What is it Bob?" And he pointed to the boy he had just brought there to this altar of prayer, he pointed to him and he said, "That's the 16th." And I said to him, "Bob, what do you mean?" He said, "That's the 16th boy from my high school that the Lord has helped me to win to Christ. He was here because I had witnessed to him and because I prayed for him, and he was here and he's here there because of that." Sixteen.

Now, if that boy's funeral service was being conducted, you could say a lot of things about him. For instance, you could say, he was the honor student in one of the greatest high schools in

America. We haven't got anything to approach it around here. Not at all. You could pile a half a dozen of them all together and it wouldn't be as big as the one in which he was the honor student. They could say it was his play that they put on there, the graduation exercises. He was this and he was that and he was the other, they gave him the high school Oscar, they sure did. But, 16, 16, 16.

Now my dear, I am the vine, ye are the branches. The family of God has one major responsibility and that's to reproduce itself. Not merely to engage in pleasant service, because so much of that can be self-centered, but when you are used of the Lord to win somebody else for Christ, and you go and tell somebody what God has done for you, then that is left outside and my prayer for you, you dear nice folks, my prayer for you would be that not only should we be pleasant, useful members of this or any other class, but that out from our lives there may flow that which would bring new life to somebody else. And that someday somebody will meet you on the golden street and say, "You were the one. You were the one who told me about Jesus. You were the one and because of it, a new family circle was started and another one and another one and another one and when the final family circle is completed, then He's coming back and the bridegroom who has waited 1,900 years for his bride, and He isn't going to wait much longer, is coming back to claim her for His own.

Now that's the message that I wanted to bring to you out of the Gospel of John, and let's remember that when we have forgotten everything else in the Gospel of John, that's the central message of it, is that our life received by the new birth must be passed on by the channel of our witnessing to the individual or preaching to the group, and it's passed on so that another life is brought into the family of God.

Our Father, we pray for Thy blessing upon us as we move out of this room to think again and rejoice in our thinking of Him who so long ago rose from the grave, halleluiaah. In Jesus name, Amen.

Our class is concluded.