

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

I Thessalonians – Sermon #2
Faith Implanted on the Inside. Evidence Seen on the Outside.
Tracks 9-15

Editorial Note: What follows are two different sermons, both on the book of I Thessalonians.

Although it is not known the exact date that these lessons were delivered, they were delivered to the Grace Bible Church in Detroit, Michigan where Sidney and Violet Cox resided during their retirement years in the 1960s. In 1962, Sidney and Violet retired to the Salvation Army retirement home in Detroit, “The Eventide.” Violet was in failing health and ultimately died in 1967. Sidney continued residency there until a late in life move to Birmingham in 1972.

During 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.” Grace Bible Church was a CMA church to which Sidney and Violet belonged during their years in Detroit. Sidney was often asked to lead Bible studies such as this study of I Thessalonians, and often filled their pulpit to preach.

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

Now, let's turn if you please, and I want you to do a little bit of preliminary marking. It'll take you about three seconds to do it. If it were going to take any more, I might hesitate. But, I think it will be all right to ask you to underline two phrases that occur. And I shan't tell you where they are. One is the phrase, "What manner of men. What manner of men." And the other is the phrase, "What manner of entering in." Now find the two of them please, underline them and you'll find that you have in your hand two of the several keys that are available for the understanding of this particular chapter of the scripture. "What manner of men. What manner of entering in."¹

God in His grace sent three men to Thessalonica. And they received a gracious gift from God in enabling them to enter into the heart and lives and affairs of people in Thessalonica. But remember before the men could enter in, God had entered into them. And what they carried in their entering in to the people in Thessalonica was that which God had implanted in them by His entering into them.

I want you to look at this church just a little while, this church at Thessalonica. Once more, let's have a look at it. Because I tell you my dear, if you look at it every Sunday between now and the first of next year, you would still find something worth looking at that you hadn't seen before. Every time you turn to it, if you turn to it with your hearts as well as your eyes, you will find there's something there. Almost I threw my notes on one side as I was thinking about them down stairs forty-five minutes ago and decided on another line of thought altogether. It's another theme that comes to you. Some fresh, I almost said vision, perhaps that is the word, that comes as you allow your heart to be controlled by God

¹ These phrases are found in I Thessalonians 1:5 and 1:9, respectively.

the Holy Spirit. Oh, if we could only understand what that means when we read God's word. Here's a church there, and we look at it, and we see three men entering in, a gracious entering in to this place of Thessalonica, and suddenly the appearance of the church at Thessalonica, and these men entering into with all that the grace of God had implanted in them - into the church at Thessalonica.

But remember that before these men could ever do anything, God had done something for this church at Thessalonica. There was somebody that was at work in Thessalonica before Paul ever arrived there. If that had not been so, he would have been beating the air, but somebody had been there before him planting the seed, stirring up the soil, doing the preliminary work. Doing what Dr. Kenneth Lee speaks of as, "The prenatal work" in Thessalonica. Something that made possible the birth of a miraculous church, and the Holy Spirit had been there, and the Holy Spirit had been doing for them, and when the church appears, we see what the Holy Spirit had been doing.

Well not only did He send three men there, but He had done a three-fold work of grace and we see it so clearly. Their faith had been supernaturally stirred. Their love had been supernaturally quickened. There was the ground from which an eternal hope could come. And it was all there. It wasn't a miracle that Paul and Silas and Timothy performed in this church at Thessalonica, it was the miracle the Holy Ghost performed in the church at Thessalonica. If there is to be faith and love and hope either there or anywhere else, it's His planting, it's the fruit of His raising. He produces it. And when it's there on the inside, then it is seen on the outside. And what we look at in this letter preliminary, or the first thing we look at, is the evidence of this work of grace, seen on the outside. Their faith. That work.

But remember my dear that faith must work on the inside before it is ever seen working on the outside. What we're looking at here in these words, the words that we read, where praise is given for their work of faith; but faith my dear is something the Holy Ghost works inside before it is ever seen on the outside. We're not looking merely at a church that was active in its work because their work was a faith on the outside. It wasn't merely that they trusted just physical things or something like that. But God had implanted within their hearts the faith that enabled them to take the first step out of darkness into light, and to step out on their nothingness and finding something that had taken place in their lives. The faith that God implants within. And then it's seen and only seen when God plants it within. It is only then seen on the outside.

We're rejoicing in a church, its faith worked. But we'd better turn our eyes upward and rejoice in a God who planted the faith within, so that the preliminary things that brought them out of darkness into light could also work. They stepped out in faith, and something that God had planted within their hearts with the possibility of them doing it had been put there by the Holy Spirit. Lord help us to understand.

Their work of faith. We're looking at a church like that. Their faith worked on the outside because it had been implanted by the acts and work of God on the inside. Their love labored, well of course, but where did the love come from? The love came as the act of God. This is not natural love, doing what comes naturally. Not at all. This isn't natural love doing its own thing. Not at all. Not at all. This is love that is the gift of God, the implanting of God Himself. The love that God gives is Himself not just something. When God's gives us of His love, He gives us of Himself; takes a slice of His heart and gives it to us. And here was the love of God in their hearts. And of course, how can love do anything less than labor on the outside. Well, of course. What would we expect if they didn't labor on the outside? What would we think about the love on the inside? Nay, not what would we think about it, but

E:\Sidney Cox Library Project\Subject Folders\I Thessalonians. Circa 1960s. Grace Bible Church. Detroit, Mich\I Thessalonians Sermon #2. Faith Implanted on the Inside. Evidence Seen on the Outside..doc

what would we know about it? For unless there is adequate labor on the outside, there is obviously a lack of love on the inside. It was love on the inside that labored on the outside. Where did this hope come from, that colored everything they did? So that no matter what they were doing, they did it in the light of His coming again, this hope that not only inspires us with that thought in what we're doing, but the hope my dear has done something on the inside before it was ever seen on the outside. For every man that has this hope in himself, cleanses himself. The hope has done its cleansing work on the inside, before it could ever, and ever did its powerful work on the outside.

We're looking at a church here, and God gives us the privilege of it. God is saying to us, "I'm just the same. I could do it for you if you'd let me. I could do it for you, if you would allow me." Can you imagine the conversation of it - that the God of the universe comes and knocks at the door of hearts of folks like us, and says, "I could do it for you if you'd let me. I could do it for your church if you'd allow me. I could do it on exactly the same basis as I did for the church in Thessalonica. I haven't changed. I haven't changed my rules, not at all. I haven't changed my conditions for powerful blessing. They are exactly the same."

Here's the church at Thessalonica with its faith working and its love labored and its hope cleansed, but powerful in its effect upon everything we do, no matter what it is. If it's the giving of a cup of cold water, if it's done in the light of His coming again with His eyes upon us. What a difference it makes, the hope there. And we've got this before us. It must be on the inside before it can ever be on the outside. And faith and love and hope were moving unhindered on the inside, and so we find them in beautiful expression on the outside.

That's always God's way. Always. God waits to plant something within us in order that they might see some evidence of it on the outside. And He wants to do it in your life and in mine. It is overwhelming isn't it, that He should even think it, much less do it. That even the thought should have been at the heart of the eternal God, that He wants to use hands as unworthy as these, as no good as these, such a life like this - that some faith and love and hope, and they do something with it on the outside. It's always God's way, who plants on the inside, but the expression on the outside is for His glory and for His use. It's always God's way.

You'll remember this beautiful illustration that the Lord Jesus Himself gave of it, that if He should plant within us His own living water, then out from our inmost being should flow rivers of living water. But the living water flows in before it can ever flow out, and the conditions under which the living water shall flow in, either to the church then, or to the church in Thessalonica, or Grace Bible Church, or any other place is given there. It was that there should be thirst, and there should be a coming, and there should be a drinking. If any man thirsts, let him come and let him drink, and when he does, out from their inmost being shall flow rivers of living water. This is God's way. That's what happened at Thessalonica. And the folks didn't have to be urged to come and do it. Not at all. They were thirsty for that which God could give them through these three men who came into their midst. God planted within them a thirst for that which they heard and how eagerly they came, and how eagerly they drank and how marvelously God used them on the outside because of it. The church at Thessalonica.

I want to mention just one other thing about it, and it's the thing we seldom think about. And that is the wonder of their unity in what they did in Thessalonica. Now there wasn't one person in Thessalonica who was saved by the grace of God through the preaching of the word who ever questioned whether

E:\Sidney Cox Library Project\Subject Folders\I Thessalonians. Circa 1960s. Grace Bible Church. Detroit, Mich\I Thessalonians Sermon #2. Faith Implanted on the Inside. Evidence Seen on the Outside..doc

they were going to be involved in the church at Thessalonica. Now they were saved by the grace of God in Thessalonica, and without an exception and without one moment of hesitation, every last one of the saved ones became involved in the church. And that too my dear is God's way. God doesn't save any of us, either in Thessalonica or anywhere else to be wandering around as wandering stars. God doesn't save any of us and then allow us to take upon ourselves the right to say whether we're going to be part of the family of God or the church of God. He doesn't give us that right at all. When we are saved, we are, if we are right with God, automatically involved in the church. And this was the secret of it there in Thessalonica. These people were not half involved, they were totally involved.

Now I don't care whether you call involvement membership or not. That's up to you. If you want to quibble over a word, well that's up to you. But there's no question about the truth of it. Not at all. A saved Christian ought to be in the church. There's no question about that according to this word. This is the way God wants it to be. The church is the vehicle through which our activity can be channeled. God doesn't expect us to be wandering star Christians going along doing our own thing. If there's ever a phrase that the devil has successfully curried in these days, it is the phrase, "Doing our own thing," especially when it applies or comes anywhere near a Christian. No Christian has any right to do his own thing at all. A Christian has a right to become involved in the fellowship of the family of God.

What would you think of a child in an ordinary family, bom into the family, but won't have anything to do with the family home and the family table and the family fellowship and all the rest of it? Content just with the family name, wandering around? What would you think of a star in the sky that wanted to be on its own and wandering around here and there and neglecting or ignoring the fact that every star in God's sky is a member of a galaxy? Not wandering stars. God can't do anything with wandering stars. God doesn't do anything with wandering Christians either. He does His work through His family.

The outward expression of it is the church of Thessalonica. Every last one of them were involved in it, and they were involved in it egregiously. And it not only took part of their time, but it took all of their time. None of them ever said, "I've got the right to do this or that or the other." Not one of them. Every last one of them realized somehow or other by the Holy Spirit, that the greatest right God ever gives to any of us is not the right to exercise our right, but the right to put it on one side. Not the right to say yes to anything, but the right to say no when God wants us to.

That's the church at Thessalonica. What a church! What a church. Would you like to join a church like that? Well they'd be glad to have you. They wouldn't ask you a lot of questions, but once you were in, you would know, sure you were in. That's for sure. Every last one of them, there wasn't one of them, not one thing that was withheld, not one. Their time, their money, their influence, their testimony; and how magnificent it was. They turned to God from idols, that's salvation. To serve them through in the living God, that's involvement in His church. And every last one was under obligation as children of God to find their right place within this family circle of God and its expression in the local church. Did you hear it? Did you hear it?

Now that's the church at Thessalonica. I don't know whether they met in a building. I don't know. I know what they did. And I know what they all did. Not one of them ever excused himself from being totally involved, not for one single moment. That's the reason why the church at Thessalonica was what it was. My. I think that one of the master strokes of the devil in these last days, when strange things are happening, is to increase the number of those who profess to be saved, who will not ally themselves

E:\Sidney Cox Library Project\Subject Folders\I Thessalonians. Circa 1960s. Grace Bible Church. Detroit, Mich\I Thessalonians Sermon #2. Faith Implanted on the Inside. Evidence Seen on the Outside..doc

with the church and its activities and its faithfulness and its service and its testimony. I think that's one of the master strokes of the devil in these days in which we live, is the number of folks that are Christians that are not a church member. Old enough to vote, but not old enough to be a church member. I think it's one of the master strokes of the evil one in the day in which we live.

The place where God will expect to find you my dear, if He should come back today in the hope of his coming, that's where He'd expect to find you, with our lives living with some group of God's children who belong to Him, not merely a part of the church, invisible, but a part of the church, visible as well. That's God's way, and the lesson comes thundering at us from this simple, beautiful story of the church at Thessalonica. It was God's church in Jesus Christ, and every last one of them were totally involved in it. And there was never a question from any one of them.

Now they didn't all prove faithful. Remember, Demas came from Thessalonica, and returned to it. But Demas hadn't appeared on the scene when this..he may have been among the first converts, but here was this thundering thing. God works in this way. That's His order, and it's been our peril that we ignore in the first place, or fail to give our total involvement to it in the second.

Now my dear, I'm going to stop right there and do something here in this last moment or two that is quite different. Have you got a scrap of paper? Get it right now and get your pencil, will you? I want to give you a little outline of this book of I Thessalonians. So if you want to make a note of it, and perhaps copy it somewhere, put it at the head of the chapters. And it's a simple little outline. We do this quite frequently. I think we gave several outlines of Titus and Timothy, etc.

Here's the first one that we have suggested for Thessalonians. And it all circles around this hope of His coming, for remember that in every chapter, that is underscored. That wherever you find something happening in any chapter in this book, it is always in the light of His coming again. His coming again.

Chapter one - an inspiring hope. We've been looking at the church at Thessalonica and wondering perhaps from whence came the abiding inspiration on the inside and then on the outside. It's an inspiring hope.

Chapter two - an encouraging hope. Now when you get into chapter two, you will find that the church at Thessalonica, the folks in it, were exactly the same as us. They needed a word of encouragement. They sure did. And if you don't know anything about that, I do. I need it frequently. I sure do. But here it comes. Where's the encouraging hope comes from? He's coming back again. He's coming back. He said He would. And He's coming back.

Chapter three - a purifying hope. "Every man that has this hope and purifies himself, even as he is pure."² And the purifying goes on and on and on, all the time. Cleansing for every day, my dear. A purifying hope.

² I John 3:3

Chapter four - a comforting hope. Don't worry about your folks that have died since you've got to know about the coming of the Lord. They're going to be taken care of. They'll be raised and we shall go up together with them. A comforting hope.

And five - a rousing hope, for this book ends, this letter ends with a trumpet call to continued service.

I Thessalonians, a little, simple outline of it.

Shall we pray?

Our Father, we pray that as we have dared to look into Thy word this morning, and as we have dared to expose ourselves to the voice of it, and we have dared to come into the presence of the person of it, we pray that as we walk out of this holy fellowship, this holy of holies in which we have been dwelling for a few minutes, may we realize, we pray Thee our Father, all that Thou hast done for us, and keep alive within our hearts the sound of Thy voice, and our obligation to Thee and to the church for which Thou didst die. We pray that this may be so, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.