

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

II Timothy – Sermon #1
A Father’s Letter. A Farewell Letter. A Final Letter.
A Look At Timothy.

Editorial Note: What follows is a sermon that was part of a series that Sidney Cox delivered on the book of II Timothy.

In 1962, Sidney and Violet Cox retired to the Salvation Army retirement home in Detroit, Michigan known as, “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.

Certain clues contained throughout this series reveal that it was delivered in 1968, in the aftermath of the death of Sidney’s beloved wife, Violet. It was delivered to the Grace Bible Church of Detroit.

During this period of his life, Sidney was in great demand as a preacher and Bible teacher both within The Salvation Army and churches of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). He had a close relationship with The Salvation Army early in life and developed a close relationship with The Christian and Missionary Alliance late in life. CMA was a wide network of churches throughout the world that shared a common theology and emphasis and was similar in that regard to The Salvation Army. Grace Bible Church was a CMA church

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

We commenced a series of studies circling around Paul’s letter to Titus. Now we know quite well that Paul had three at least, and maybe more, very intimate, young associates. Two of them were very, very useful. One of them, alas drifted away again. I’m thinking of Timothy and Titus and Demas. Now Timothy and Titus, their names and their lives shine brighter all the time. But one of the saddest things in this last letter that we are now studying is the word that Paul says about Demas, right in that last chapter, in almost the last heart throb that we see. Almost, not quite, but you can almost see tears being wiped from his eyes as Paul writes, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.”¹ And if Paul wasn’t such a Christian gentleman you could almost hear the sound of his voice underscoring the deterioration there is in a verse like that. “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.”

Now the two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy, or the letters that he wrote to Timothy and Titus necessarily have repetitions in them because they were written for the same purpose. They were written for the guidance of young men who were to assume a tremendous responsibility - the responsibility that Paul refers to in his letter to the Corinthians as, “The care of the churches,” a responsibility that had prematurely aged the Apostle Paul. He speaks of himself, as you know, when he writes to Philemon six years before he came to the end of his journey. Six years before he

¹ II Timothy 4:10.

wrote II Timothy, and he refers to himself then as “Paul, the aged.” And he was only about 60 at that time. He died when he was about 66 as far as we can ascertain. You don’t have to be too dogmatic about dates like that, but that’s the general thought. But he was an old man six years before he came to the end of the journey in that Roman prison cell, and referred to himself as ‘Paul, the aged.’ And if there is one thing that will age a man prematurely, it’s this thing that we call, “the care of the churches.” And the care of the churches my dear is not merely financial or statistical or things of that kind. The real care of the church that falls upon a pastor is the burden he shares with those who belong to him. That’s the thing that keeps him awake at night. That’s the thing that comes sweeping in when he wants to pray. Now Paul knew about that and he writes to two young men and says, “This things coming on your shoulders.” And he writes them a letter so that they may be under girded, fortified, strengthened, for a task that only those who are engaged in it can ever understand it to the full. It’s almost impossible to understand the burden that comes and ages quite frequently the man who shares the burden with his congregation.

Now here are these young fellows, and they’re going to do just that. And so Paul writes to them and he writes to Titus, and he writes to Timothy. And we noted several things about his letter to Timothy, II Timothy, which is the letter that we have before us. We noted a number of things.

We noted first of all, it was a father’s letter. There’s a tenderness about him. When Paul writes to young Timothy, he uses the most beautiful word that can describe the relationship, not only in the English language, but in the original language. He speaks of Timothy as, “My dearly beloved son.” And he uses the lovely word, “Technon,” (?) which is the original word that implies the closest, most beautiful relationship. It was a father’s word to his son. And you can see it and hear it all the way through. There’s scarcely a sentence in it that does not bear the father’s touch.

And we noted it last week where it came from, who was there with him when he was writing. This cold damp place where this man was incarcerated and where for some reason or other Doctor Luke was there with him and writing there. Have you ever wondered what Doctor Luke’s hands looked like as he was writing there and Paul was dictating? He was writing spiritual prescriptions. He’d given a lot of other kinds. He gave some of them to Timothy himself, because Timothy had stomach trouble. And so he gave him a prescription for that. But Guy King, in his wonderful little book called *To My Son*, the book that I mentioned last Sunday, and I hope you’ll buy it. You can’t get it from the Grand Bible and Book Store, not yet. You will be able to, and I’ll tell you the reason for that remark. I was there a day or two ago and bought the last two copies of it. So they’ve ordered them especially for you. And you go on in with that lovely smile on your face and say I want a copy of this book, and they’ll know where you came from. They surely will. But in that book he speaks of Doctor Luke’s prescription there as referring to the medicine bottle rather than the liquor bottle when he recommends him to have a little wine for his stomach’s sake. He wasn’t talking about the corner liquor store. He was talking about the doctor’s office, and the medicine bottle.

And here is this lovely letter. It’s not only a father’s letter my dear, it’s a farewell letter as well. You remember that we mentioned last week that this is his last letter, and we not only do not hear from him anymore, we don’t see him anymore either. After this letter closes, there is only one place where his name appears from then on. Strange, because he’s been the center of this great central

section of the New Testament, humanly speaking. He's been in the center of it all. And now he's to fade out. So it's a farewell letter.

Not only a father's letter, but it's a farewell letter as well. He says final things. He will never write to Timothy again, never. He will never be able to emphasize again the glory of his apostleship. Now we've heard something about it this morning, but there is one thing about an apostleship that we need to keep in mind, it's all that we have thought about. But there is one thing that always goes with an apostleship, and that is the authority that's back of it. Not merely a position. Not merely a traveling assignment. It's all of those. But the thing that distinguishes the apostle from the disciple, one step down, and the believer, two steps down – for you've got three kinds of people that are being dealt with, that have been brought in by grace. You have believers and some of the believers step up onto the level of disciples. And some of the disciples step up onto the level of authority and apostleship – those who can be trusted with it. And the Apostle Paul is writing to young Timothy, and not only saying nice things to Timothy, but he's saying for the last time, "I'm the apostle of Jesus Christ." Extraordinary? Why certainly it is. You can hear the man, if we dare to say it, boasting about it. You can hear the pride in his voice, as he says "I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ." Wait a minute. Where had apostleship led him? It had led him to a Roman prison dungeon from which he was to be taken very soon and his head chopped off on a block out there on the road somewhere or other, and his body flung somewhere. And yet in spite of it, you can see his shoulders back, and his eyes flaming, and his face alight with pride that he's still the apostle, regardless.

We're talking about a very unusual man. It was a farewell letter as well as a father's letter. If you had a son that you loved very much and you were writing one last letter to him, what would you say? What would you say? Well now we don't need to wonder too much about what we would say, but we do know what Paul said. That's the point, isn't it? We know what he said. We surely do. And he just poured out his heart to this young man. Not only that the young man himself might be properly equipped, but that he might do the work that God had placed upon him. He becomes almost if not quite, the central figure in a great section of the Christian church in those days.

Now it was a final letter as well. It was a father's letter. It was a farewell letter. It was final letter as well. Because it comes from this Roman prison cell and never again will he write. When the moment came when Paul's voice ceased, and Doctor Luke would look up and say, "Is there any more?" And finally the word would come, "No. That's all." And from that point on, the sound of his voice is not heard. No other word comes from him. What he had said, he had said! And there it is. The finality about it.

Now we delight in talking about Paul because one of the things that we said yesterday, or last Sunday, excuse me. One of the things we said was that this little letter which we call II Timothy is a letter from an old man, to a young man about the God Man. And we not only said it, but we reminded ourselves of the number of times when things occur in series of threes, where you find things over and over again. I didn't try to emphasize that thought when I suggested that this was a father's letter and a farewell letter and a final letter, although you've got the three again. But all through this book you can find things in series of threes. And that beautiful suggestion by Guy King that this is a letter from an old man, to a young man about the God Man is worth remembering.

This old man, we've been talking about him. We've mentioned one or two things already this morning. We mentioned a great many other things. But this old man who had one thing in mind all the way through. He says it in his final words, "I have kept the faith." And in the beginning of this letter he underscores it almost in his life blood that his great responsibility was for the faith that can change men from ordinary human animals into children of God. And this was his responsibility. And all the way through you find him underscoring it, and saying to young Timothy, "This is the thing you must watch. Other things are secondary. Whatever it is that comes out of your life after I've gone, whatever comes out of your life, it must emphasize and underscore the truth of the gospel - the truth that transforms lives. This was his burden there.

I want you for a moment or two to take a look at the young man to whom the letter is written. Take a look at him please. Now we know more about Timothy than we knew about Titus. We know a few things about Titus. He was a Gentile. Just where he came from and a lot of other things, we do not know. We don't know anything about his father or mother, or a lot of other things. But we know a lot about Timothy. Not only about Timothy, but we know about the home where he was raised. We know a lot about his grandmother and his mother. You read these first verses of the 16th chapter of Acts and you've got a thumbnail description of that home where Timothy was raised. Strange thing about it is that it doesn't say much about his father. Says a lot about his grandmother and a lot about his mother. And a lot about Timothy himself. Doesn't say much about his father. Just five words, "His father was a Greek," and that's all. There isn't anything else. He's never mentioned any other time. Paul doesn't mention him. Timothy doesn't mention him..any other time. I wonder why? Well now there are a lot of folks who have wondered why. Men have wondered why whose shoes we're not fit to clean. We couldn't undo their shoe latches in their wisdom and understanding. And most of them have come to the conclusion that Timothy's father was not only a Greek, but he was on the outside as far as the Christian life is concerned. We don't hear one word about him again. That's all. So that if that is so, then Timothy was a child of a divided family – a Christian mother on the one side and a pagan father on the other. Now I'm only presuming that that's so. But if that is the case, then Timothy is all the more remarkable for that, isn't he?

I wonder what this man whose name we do not know, I wonder what he planned for this boy of his. When this lovely boy was born of this beautiful Jewish mother who believed, because that's what it says. I wonder what he looked like? I wonder what his father thought about him? I wonder what plans Timothy's father had for this boy? You think he was going to plan for him to go into business with him later on? Was he going to take out a big insurance policy that would guarantee that this boy would be able to go to the University of Tarsus? It's quite likely. Any father worth his salt would be doing that type of thing. Of course he would. Of course. We don't know what he planned, but we know what grandmother, Lois and mother, Eunice planned, and we know what they did too. For regardless of what the father had in mind, we know what these magnificent women had in mind. And they took that little boy and surrounded his life with the protection of the word of God. They built a barrier around that precious little life. And all of Satan's darts afterwards were never able to pierce it. Do you remember where it says that? II Timothy 3:15, and you'll find the words, "From a child, thou hast known the holy scriptures that are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Can you see that wall around this precious little life? Can you see these busy women guarding this little life? Can you see them piling the word of God into him?

And here it is. Wise unto salvation, and yet the strange thing about it is that there came a time when this boy, wise unto salvation, who knew all the answers, had to make a decision and had to be brought finally out of darkness into light, and Paul was there when that happened. In spite of the fact that he knew it all, that around him had been placed this barrier, this protective cover of the word of God; nevertheless, there came the time when this boy had to make a decision for himself.

You know there's a difference between being wise "unto salvation" and being wise "into salvation." Did you hear that? Unto and into are two different words, and they underscore two different conditions. We've got thousands of young people scattered through our churches in this area where we live, thousand of them that are wise unto salvation. But not so many that have stepped from the "unto" to the "into." Young Timothy had to step from being wise "unto salvation" to being wise "into salvation." And if he hadn't made that step, he would have been lost regardless. Now we can't understand that and if it didn't say it in the word of God, nobody would believe it. But that's so just the same. There came a time when a young man stepped from the "unto" to the "into."

What a transformation that came and then in his heart, and not before. Around his life it had been before, but now in his heart there was this unfeigned faith that shone so beautifully in grandmother, Lois and in mother, Eunice. And, writes the apostle, "it is in thee also." This lovely, beautiful thing. But it happened my dear when he stepped from the "unto" to the "into." When the faith not merely surrounded him on the outside, but took up its residence on the inside. We've got lots of young folks who can give you all the answers, know all the answers. Sure. But that one step from the "unto" to the "into" has not been taken. Scores of them are like that.

Now here's a young man and we know this about him. We know the kind of home he lived in. We don't know anything about the home where Titus lived. We know about this one. This young man. Now we know something about the man who wrote it and we could say a lot more about the young man who received it.

By the way, have you ever wondered what Timothy's hands and fingers felt like when this parchment that Paul had written from that Roman dungeon that was probably still damp when it reached its destination? Have you ever wondered what his fingers felt like when he touched it? Oh, we take the letter and its just so much more paper, isn't it? Just paper. Just paper. But it wasn't that with him. What do you think he felt like when he took that letter in his hand and opened it and found that the very first word was the name of the man who under God had been instrumental in leading him from the "unto" to the "into?" What do you think he felt like when he read, "To my well beloved son?" What do you think he felt like when he knew that the responsibility that was coming upon him was the responsibility not merely for the outward appearances of the church and the outward affairs of the church, but the inward throbbing life of the church? That's the thing he was to be responsible for. That's the only thing that matters anyhow. The church that's right on the outside and hasn't got this throbbing thing on the inside is but an empty shell anyhow. But here he is to carry responsibility for that which really makes a church.

A church isn't made by doctrine. A church is made and rests upon fact, and the great thing that Paul had been emphasizing, that Timothy himself must continue to emphasize was the thing that Paul

himself defined when he said, “This is the gospel that I preach unto you, that Christ died according to the scripture and was buried and rose again according to the scripture.” That’s the thing on which the church is founded and into that church can come sometimes blood transfusions of doctrine. But it isn’t the doctrine that makes the church, it’s the fact on which it rests that makes the church. You give a blood transfusion of doctrine to a church that’s already there, not something that is created by an infusion of doctrine. Not at all. And here is this man, who is to take the responsibility for these churches already there, and then in God’s good time and way, doctrine can be poured into it. For the doctrine my dear is merely the explanation of the facts on which the church rests. That’s all. It’s merely the explanation of the facts on which the church rests. Now into it can come these great deposits of doctrine and of all the men that did it. It’s this man that wrote this letter that we’re talking about. My, what a responsibility. And a young man is facing this, and somehow or other the majesty and the magnitude of it had gripped his heart. And there in that place far away, a letter had been written and it comes into his hand and he knows very well that he is the one upon whom this responsibility rests.

II Timothy. A letter that came out of a Roman prison cell. A letter than contained Paul’s last will and testament. A letter that contains his last witness for Christ, his last testimony. A letter upon which Paul’s tears fell for the last time. A letter that carries with it apostolic authority, and it comes into the hand of a young man. What a responsibility. What a responsibility. When Paul explains some of these things, I wonder what he will say? When he details some of these great basic facts that are there, I wonder what he will say, because remember that whatever he says, he will not say it again. This is the last time.

And so once more, we’ve been looking at a letter that was written by an old man, to a young man about the God Man, and it was written not only to somebody a long way away, and a long time ago, but it was written for us too. Did you hear it?

Shall we bow our heads in a word of prayer.

Our Father we give thee thanks for the word God that lies before us, and the privilege of proclaiming it. We thank thee our father for the weight of it and the wonder of it. We thank thee for the wonder working power that there is in it, and we pray that we may go out of it with something of its solemnity and its majesty within our hearts. Give to us some sense of our responsibility when we remember that this transforming faith that shone so brightly in a home years ago has transformed our lives, if they’ve ever been transformed at all, that’s transformed our lives and we give thee thanks for it through Jesus Christ our Lord.