

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

Audio Message

The Quality Of This Audio Is Poor, But Audible

Lions, Pits and Snowy Days – Part I

I Chronicles, Chapter 11

**Editorial Note: This series of two sermons is an example of how Sidney Cox attempted to use the tape recorder to help him reach groups with his sermons and Bible lessons. He had purchased a reel-to-reel tape recorder and used it extensively in this effort.**

**The origins of his interest in this technology and technique trace to the health and condition of his beloved wife, Violet. Violet was a victim of severe rheumatoid arthritis, and was an invalid for several years leading up to her death in 1967. During the latter years of her life, Sidney was her sole caregiver. She was never institutionalized.**

**As a result of his dedication to her, Sidney had to curtail his travels and preaching, although he remained in great demand by The Salvation Army and the Christian and Missionary Alliance churches to preach and teach. Unable to travel, he responded to invitations by recording his sermons and Bible lessons in the quietness of his apartment and mailed the audio tape to the various groups for their use.**

**On other occasions when he was able to appear in person, he would record his delivered sermons and lessons for future distribution to other groups who had an interest.**

**This series was recorded in his apartment and distributed to a small home Bible study group for their use. I am unsure of the exact date at which they were recorded, and the group to whom they were sent; however, certain clues would likely date this recording to the late 1960s.**

**J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. August 5, 2010**

Our message tonight may prove to be a bit unusual. It has to do with three words – lions, pits and snowy days; and the moment we mention that, it brings before us one of those gigantic figures in the central history of the Children of Israel – this man named, Benaiah, of whom it is said, I Chronicles 11:22, “He slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day.”

Now, we find this man in the midst of one of the most interesting periods in the history of God’s chosen people, Israel. The kingdom had been divided. Saul, the first king was dead. David had been anointed, but immediately there came the break with the north and the south, and for seven years, David was king over the southern territory only. And then, after that period of time, the people of Israel came together. They had their king, they had the united nation. In the mean time, they had conquered the stronghold of the Jebusites, the most famous city on earth that became known afterwards as, Jerusalem. When they conquered it, it was Judah – the stronghold in the center of the Jubusites. But, they captured this great city and it became the capital city of all Israel. Then after twenty years of absence, the Ark of the Covenant was brought back into its resting place in the city of Jerusalem.

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Now, this is the background of the story. Of course, there are lights and shadows in it. You see David in custody and in danger. You see him gathered in the \_\_\_\_ with some of his mighty men, for David had gathered around himself a group of men gigantic in their physical prowess and unmistakable in their loyalty to the king. This was a group of men who surrounded David, and \_\_\_\_ at all times, regardless of danger, to do the thing that he wanted. You'll remember that on one occasion, David \_\_\_\_ a cold, cold day and uttered a request that was almost a prayer, and he said, "Oh, for a drink of water from the well by Bethlehem's gate." And Benaiah, the man who is before us particularly in this story, and two others made their way to Bethlehem which was in the hands of the enemy, and drew the water from the well by Bethlehem's gate, brought it back to David; and you will recall that David was so moved by their loyalty and the danger that they had faced to fulfill his request; and he couldn't drink this water. He poured it out as an offering unto the Lord.

Now, this is the background of our story. This is the time that we are talking about and in the midst of this period, we find this man, Benaiah. Quite a bit is said about him. He's not one of these isolated characters of whom we read just once, and that's all. You read of Behaiah a good many times. But in I Chronicles, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, you will find, in accordance with many others, a look of the things that Benaiah did that were quite unusual.

For instance, he slew, we are told, two lion-like men of Moab. Now, we don't quite know what two lion-like men of Moab mean. But, it obviously had something to do with two strange human animals that looked like lions; hairy bodies and the roar of their voices and their unusual strength; and this man, Benaiah handled both of them. I don't know whether he took them by the neck and snapped their heads together - we can only conjecture, and your imagination would be as good as mine on that. But at any rate, the word said he slew two lion-like men of Moab.

And then this unusual man faced an Egyptian, seven and a half feet high, whose spear was like a weaver's beam, and Benaiah was armed only with a staff, and then he faced this gigantic creature, and by his skill and strength, he took the spear from him and slew the Egyptian.

Now, the third thing that we are told about him is that he slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and while we shall not be spending time trying to imagine what happened with those lion-like men of Moab or the Egyptian seven and a half feet tall, we shall spend time about this particular part of the incident where he slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day.

Now, that gives us the background for that which lies before us and our discussion and our thoughts, our ponderings and perhaps in the midst of it, a prayer as well.

Now, the story hidden away in the heart of this bit of scripture, and it's as fascinating as the \_\_\_\_ of any adventure novel. In that land, the lion was a common and terrible enemy. The writers of the Bible constantly refer to this ferocious beast in their figures of speech. There is the roaring lion and the fierce lion of Job 14 and Job 10:16. The lion that tears the soul as the writer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Psalm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse says. The lion that waits secretly - Psalm 10:9. The devouring lion - \_\_\_\_\_ 13:8. Sampson faced the lion. David faced the lion. Daniel faced the lion.

Now, somewhere in that neighboring community, there was a little village that had been menaced by a prowling lion. The cattle had been slain. The sheep had disappeared, and finally, a child. And then, the men of the village dig a pit, a trap they may have taken from an old, abandoned well; and cleaned it out. At any rate, there was the trap, the pit that had been dug. And they covered over the top of it with branches of the trees and earth to camouflage it and then put the bait somewhere near to it, and then waited.

But the lion seemed to avoid this. For a long time, the lion and the pit did not meet. And finally, there comes a day when the winter time approaches, and the earth is covered in snow and the path that leads by the side of this camouflaged pit was covered over with snow. And then in the night time, they hear a crack and a roar and the lion was in the pit.

But, what is to be done now? Unless the lion is slain, and quickly, it will escape sooner or later. Somebody must slay the lion. "Any volunteers?"

"Not me. Not me."

But finally, Benaiah volunteers. "I'm not afraid of it." He's already handled as we have said two lion-like men of Moab. He'd already conquered a seven and a half foot Egyptian. And the moment the village dragged the covering from the mouth of the pit, and there crashes the lion. Eyes glaring. Fangs frothing, and Benaiah watching his opportunity and then leaped into the lion and slayed it. And there was darkness in that village and respite from danger. Benaiah had slain the lion in the pit on the snowy day.

Now, this is not only a story of Benaiah, an obscure Old Testament character. If you look carefully, and think carefully, you'll find that you are looking at a fragment of light itself. For sooner or later, you all become acquainted with lions, pits and snowy days. Life is not a bed of roses. We do not go to heaven on flowery beds of ease. There is danger everywhere. Pits for our feet. Lions that may attack us. Snowy days that may come.

Now, let's take a look at this and see if it has to something to say to us. Are you listening? We will talk about snowy days a little later. But for the moment, let's talk about lions and pits, for there's many a man, and many a woman, and it may be somebody listening to us who has been called upon in these days to meet the lion of loss in the pit of bereavement on the snowy day of sorrow. That's only a suggestion. You fill in the details for yourself. We may not always know the terrible experience I have just named, but \_\_\_\_\_, "Goes along like a roaring lion," remember, "seeking whom he may devour."<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ but his lions \_\_\_\_\_. He made a pit for our feet. He will cause the snowy days. Some of his lions will attack us from the outside, but we shall discover most of them on the inside. The lions love to lurk in the pit of our sinful human nature.

You ask David about that. And here's a story he tells in Psalms 57. This is what he says. "My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed

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<sup>1</sup> I Peter 5:8.

down: they have digged a pit before me.”<sup>2</sup> And, then he cries exultantly, “He brought me out also from an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.”<sup>3</sup>

Most of us for instance know something of the lion of unconfessed sin. What a lion it is. It roars inwardly, not outwardly. Our friends are not aware of it, but we are, and so is God. How this lion roars when we approach the Bible, and instead of the beauty of God’s word, we hear and see the snarling ugliness of the lion of unconfessed sin. That’s hidden away in the heart that no one knows about. No one cares. Nobody is aware of it, and yet, there it is. Dark. Unconfessed. And God knows about it, and we know about it; and when we approach God’s word, it seems as if the word of God screams at us, and points at our unconfessed sin.

How the lion of unconfessed sin roars at us when we kneel to pray. The specter of it lies between us and the face of God. Many a man and woman have quit Bible reading and prayer altogether because of the roaring of the lion of unconfessed sin. This lion roars loudest when we’re alone. We seek solitude, but in the stillness, we hear the sound of the accusing voice. Unconfessed sin is the cancer eating at the spiritual vitals of multitudes of Christians. It is the poison in the bloodstream; the weight on hands and feet; the cause of spiritual stagnation. Here is a man whose life was bright and beautiful for God and his hands and feet were constantly busy in the Master’s service. \_\_\_\_\_, we noticed the glow fade from his face and the feet are no longer swift \_\_\_\_\_ his bidding. What’s the matter? If we could look beneath the surface, we should discover sin, unconfessed sin. Progress in the spiritual life is impossible as long as sin is covered.

Again, how frequently we meet the lion of questionable things in the pit of heart surrender. The devil can dress this lion until he looks like a lamb. The lion of questionable things is a subtle beast. He not only looks like a lamb, he actually talks like one. Have you ever heard him? “We should relax once in a while. Oh, there’s no harm in that. You’re entitled to a little fun – all work and no play. Everybody’s doing it.” Familiar sounds to all of us. We are largely judged by our attitude toward questionable things. When certainty faces us, and that is, the Lord expects the Christian to leave questionable things alone. Whatever brings me under its power and lessens my own power, is bad. The tendency of questionable things is to make us get used to sin and to think lightly of it. When this happens, the cause, however trifling it may seem, ceases to be questionable and becomes positively bad.

Captain Reginald Wallis, the famous young Irish evangelist, who went to be with the Lord as a young man several years ago wrote some very fine books for the guidance of young Christians, and in one of them, he suggests the following rules for guidance in the matter of doubtful things:

One: whatever dulls the sensitiveness of my spirit toward God, or takes the \_\_\_\_\_ my thought as one must be ruled out, for He is my Lord. Whatever injures or weakens my body, or affects my mastery of it, must be ruled out, for it is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Whatever hurts the earnestness and clearness of my witness to Jesus Christ before others must be ruled out, for I must be a witness for Him before all men. Whatever lessens in any way the result of my service must be ruled out, for service for Him must be the pattern of my life. Whatever may cause my brother to stumble in his Christian life must be ruled out, for that would grieve Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 57:4-6.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 40:2.

These questionable things thrive in the sinner's darkness of the pit of half-surrender.

Many a Christian is familiar with the pit of prayerlessness. Here is where we meet the lion of doubt. The pit of prayerlessness is a dark and dismal dungeon, and the longer we stay in it the darker it grows. We will not stay long in the pit of prayerlessness where we discover the lion of doubt. This beast of darkness loves to dwell where prayer is absent. Satan, the roaring lion, still trembles when he sees \_\_\_\_ things upon his knees, but he roars with \_\_\_\_\_ when the fragrant incense ceases to rise from the altar of intercession. If we allow the Devil to crowd us into the pit of prayerlessness, we may expect to face the lion of doubt; and when we face this lion in the pit of prayerlessness, we find our spiritual hands are tied, our eyes become dull, our feet are no longer swift to do His will. There is no thanksgiving in a prayerless life. There may be and probably will be criticism and grumbling and touchiness – it's easy to find the language of the \_\_\_\_ upon our lips when prayer ceases. A prayerful life is a victorious life. A prayerless life is a defeated life. It is God's will for us, and God's gracious provision for us that our Christian lives should be lived in the clear sunlight where lions do not lurk in \_\_\_\_ of darkness.

\_\_\_\_ Isaiah tell of such a place and such a provision in words of sparkling and unearthly beauty. He wrote a poem. We call it Isaiah, the 35<sup>th</sup> chapter, and in it he said this:

“For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. Listen to it. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.”<sup>4</sup>

And, wherever you turn in God's book there is the sound like the throbbing of a thousand voices raised in song when they tell us of faith that \_\_\_\_ the mouth of lions.

Don't try to handle a lion with your own strength. The lamb of flesh will fail you every time. Only the lamb of the Tribe of Judas can slay the lions that lay up in the pit of our sinful nature and heart. He is able. He is able to keep you from falling. His arm is not shortened.

Hallelujah.

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 35:6-9.