

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

II Timothy – Chapter Two (Part II)
Gold and Silver Vessels – The Reflections of His Face in You
Delivered at The Salvation Army Iowa Officers' Councils
September 23, 1969

Editorial Note: From 1962 – 1972, Sidney Cox lived in the retirement home of The Salvation Army in Detroit, Michigan known as “The Eventide.” His beloved wife, Violet was in failing health and ultimately died in 1967. During the last several years of her life, she suffered from severe rheumatoid arthritis which rendered her a virtual invalid. Sidney was her care giver and during this period he ceased his travels to preach and teach.

Following Violet’s death, he was able to resume his travels. He was still sought after by The Salvation Army to preach and teach. On this occasion in 1969, at the age of 82, he had been invited to lead services at the Iowa Officers’ Councils of The Salvation Army. This is a large regional gathering of Salvation Army officers during which they receive training and guidance to serve them in their local corps ministries.

All of these officers would have known about Sidney Cox, a former Salvation Army officer and his career and life. Many would have known him personally. He was an iconic figure in Army circles and almost universally known.

This is a continuation of the sermon begun on CD 81-2.

Why, certainly we should. And a spring in our step even though you may be more than 80 years old. Why, sure. We're no ordinary people. Now you've got the same picture here. You've got a “great house.” Now it doesn't say much about the house itself, except that it's a great house. But it does say something about what's inside it. And here again, you've got this contrast method of teaching. Two things, side by side. In this house there are household utensils. And that can be the subject of our message this afternoon, if you like - household utensils. What kind? Well, now, here you have two different kinds. You've got gold and silver and you have wood and earth, or earthenware. And you take a look at it, and remember, these things are alive. They're not like the gold vessel that you might see somewhere or the old common place thing that you find in your kitchen. That's dead! But the vessels in this house are alive, just like everything else about it. It's alive. These vessels, their alive. Gold and silver. Wood and earth. And you look at them and you say, “Oh yes, I get the message.” Why, sure we do.

But I want you to notice this, my dear. That while one vessel is gold or silver, and the other is wood or earthenware, both vessels are in the house. He's not talking about something that's outside. He's talking about something that's in the house. Both of them are in the house. And don't forget this - that they are both utilitarian. That is, the golden vessel may hold a certain quantity. The wooden vessel would hold just as much. It isn't an issue of capacity or of quantity. Not at all. Not at all. A golden vessel holds so much. That wooden vessel will hold just as much. And it's in the house. There it is. In

the house.

Now, my dear, what is the difference between a golden vessel, and remember he's talking about somebody, not something; a golden vessel and a wooden vessel? What's the difference? What is the essential difference? Not that one is a little more valuable on the market than the other one. Not that the other one is a little more attractive to the eyes than this one. Not that this one belongs in the kitchen and the other one belongs in the drawing room. Not at all. It's something more than that. What is the essential difference? Oh, my dear, listen to it. The essential difference is just this. That the owner of the house and the owner of the vessels can see the reflection of his face in that golden vessel and he can't see it in the wooden vessel. I think the owner of the house appreciates the utility of the wooden vessel. I don't think he'd throw it out into the garbage can. Not at all. I think he appreciates its usefulness. But there's something that is of very great value to him. And he's so proud of this because he can see the reflection of his face in the golden vessel and he can't in that wooden vessel.

Now, my dear, it ought to say something to us, don't we? Because we're either one or the other. We're in the house, alright. We are very much utilitarian. We are of use. We're not going to be thrown out into some garbage can because we're not quite so attractive as something else. Oh no. Not at all. My heavenly Father doesn't work that way. Not at all. But he does want to see the reflection of his face. And that's the thing that brings the intense, intimate, ultimate satisfaction to his heart. Not how useful you are. Not at all. But can he see the reflection of his face in your life?

Now, my dear, that's the message that an old man is bringing to a young man. And he's saying to him, "Timothy, you will find in your ministry that there are people all the way around you who are gold and silver vessels. And you will find a great many more who are just wood and earthenware. You will find a lot of them there. But remember, Timothy, that the first thing you've got to solve is: Which are you? Which one are you? Are you a gold and silver vessel? Because your heavenly Father wants to see the reflection of his face in your life. And it's little use you telling other people what they ought to be unless you are first that yourself." It isn't any use us going to our people and saying to them, "You ought to be something more than just wooden vessels."

And by the way, you've got lots of wooden vessels, haven't you? In every corps that's represented here, you've got a few little gold and silver ones. Just a few. Not many. Because you don't find them anywhere. And you'll have a far large number of wood and earthenware vessels. You've got them in your corps, of course, you have. And if you have any doubt about it, I'll tell you how you can prove which is which. You call a Bible class on Wednesday night and you'll have 3 or 4 gold and silver vessels. But you suggest the bowling alley on Thursday night and you'll find the difference. Did you hear it? Oh, sure. And they're all in the house. Oh my, yes. Sure. We're not going to throw anybody out. Of course, they won't come to a Bible class, but they will go to a bowling alley. We're not going to throw them out. Not at all. A bowling alley may have some value. I don't know. I don't go, but that's not anything against it. There's a lot of places I don't go.

But what about this gold and silver business? What about it? A gold and silver vessel? Now, the old man is writing to the young man in order that, first, he may look that thing in the face for himself. And then, to look it in the face for those to whom he is ministering and those for whom he is responsible, like the church at Ephesus. No use talking to the church at Ephesus, and saying "You ought to be gold

and silver and here you are only wood and earthenware.” No use saying, “Why don't you become this or that or the other.” No use saying that. What they're going to do is to take one good look at the man who's talking, and they're going to determine in their hearts what you are: gold and silver, or wood and earthenware. And there are two kinds of ware all the way along.

You know, the ultimate purpose of God is that he should see in your face the reflection of his own. And he wants to bring out of your life and, first, into your life, that which will reproduce in you and in me the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit is the Executor of the Godhead in the greatest thing that the Holy Spirit ever does, and that's to reproduce the Lord Jesus in you. And when that's done, God can see the reflection of his face in you.

Now, do you want a scripture for that? Do you? Because I can give it to you. And it's a very easy scripture to remember. Because all you need to do is to remember 2,4,6. You can remember that. II Corinthians, 4th chapter, 6th verse. 2,4,6. And this is what it says, that “God, who has shined out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to bring the light of the glory of the character of God (I've changed a word there.) in the face of Jesus Christ.”¹ Now, here is somebody living in you in whom all God's glory dwells. And your greatest value to your community – I almost said your greatest asset, I suppose it's all right to use that, but your greatest value in the community is not what you can do, what other people can do. You may be able to do it a little better. You may be more willing to do it than other people are, but that's not the great value. The great value to your community that in you, your people can see the reflection of the face of God and the glory is that God can see in you his own reflection and that's why he sent you to wherever you may be. You didn't go there by accident. We're not children of chance. We're not floxin and jetson (?) on any kind of a stream that flowing on toward the sea. Not at all. God has sent you somewhere and the ultimate purpose of it was that as you walk the streets of your city and as you stand on the platform of your corps and as you move into the Rotary Club and as you go to the preachers meeting that you carry with you some of this reflection of the loveliness of our Lord that the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us. That's what they could see in the early disciples, wasn't it? There was a frowning crowd that gathered some of the early disciples into prison and faced them there, and they were going to do this, that and the other but somebody stopped them and said, “You'd better be careful what you do with these men for they've been with Jesus and learned of him.” And something of his loveliness had not just on the outside, but it had been coming, flowing from his lovely presence on the inside.

Now, one of the marvelous things my dear that God can do, is to transmute wood and earth into gold and silver. Now only God can do that, but he can. He can take a wooden vessel and not merely move it to another position, he can change its nature. He sure can. And it's marvelous how he can do – now we're quite used to thinking of our Lord turning water into wine. But he can do something else, he can turn wood into gold if you'll let him. And that is not an idle phrase either, because he never does it unless we want him to and unless we're willing for him to do it. Now I'll tell you why we say that, because the very next verse tells us this, “If a man purge himself.” What? Is that the secret of it - moving from one level to another? Is that the secret of it? And this is something we do. God provides all the equipment. God provides the detergent, but you put yourself in the washing machine! Now that's his plan – I can't explain it, but that's what it says. “If a man purge himself, he shall be a vessel of

1 II Corinthians 4:6

honor.”² Evidently, something keeps us down on the wooden level and if we're willing to have this thing cleansed away, we can rise to the higher one. And not only rise to the higher one, but we can be gold and silver, even though before we were wood and earthenware. And God in his grace can work this transforming miracle in anybody's life, if they're willing for it.

There are two great moments of delight in any Salvation Army officer's life or any preacher's life. One is, when a man comes out of darkness into light. When a soul comes from the far distance and is made nigh by the blood of Christ. Occasionally you have seen that. Not very often. You don't see very often, I'm not talking about people at the penitent form, because you can get a lot of people at the penitent form and nothing happens. And you know that to your sorrow. You know that quite well. If they come in the penitent form, just to get a little something or other into an empty bucket. The bucket is gone and the emptiness is still there, before they ever get outside the building. That's the thing that happens so frequently in gatherings of all kinds. We get a little bit of extra something or other into our buckets and before we get home the bucket is empty again. You'll have to watch out because somebody would like to do that to you, and by the time you get to your destination tonight, the bucket may be empty again, and it will be if he has his way. You'd better be on guard against it because it happens quite frequently. It sure does. It certainly does.

But there's something more than that. It's a change of nature, so we're not a wooden vessel anymore - we become gold and silver. And this transmuting process that's in the hands of God, and God only, is something that cannot be understood. Perhaps and cannot be explained, but it's something that can take place. It sure can. And God can take a wooden vessel and transmute it into something that's gold, but he never does it, until the wooden vessel, alive remember, somebody not something, this wooden vessel alive, recognizes what it is that keeps him down on this wooden level, and turns from it to the cleanses agent of the blood of the Word, so that God can lift a vessel from this level to this, and not only that, but change it from wood into gold. Why, of course.

Now, my dear, the second great thing that comes to any officer's life, is when some second class Christian moves up and becomes a first one. Did you hear it? An occasionally you see that, don't you? Once in a while you'll see somebody who is distinctly second rate, and something happens. Some miracle happens in their life, and they move up onto the higher level. And that's the second moment of great delight in your heart and life. The first one is to see them come out of the darkness. The second one is to see them move from this low level up onto the higher one. Gold and silver. Wood or earthenware.

And remember, my dear, there is a word there that we've only indefinitely touched upon. And it's the word “purge”. Now, there's the secret. You see, what is it that can make possible this transfer from one level to another? What is it that can make possible this transmuting process from wood to gold? What is it? What is it? What is it? It's, “if any man purge himself.” Did you hear it? And here we've got something that we'd better write upon our hearts in letters that will flame, that God's basic requirement for everyone of us is not cleverness, it's cleanliness. Did you hear it? That's what God's requiring. Now he can use cleverness, of course, and does. But let me say something to you, and I shan't fuss at you if you argue about this - God never uses cleverness unless it is accompanied by cleanliness. The only kind of hands God ever uses to carry the vessel up the hill of the Lord and into

² II Timothy 2:21.

the temple, the only kind of hands that God ever uses – clean hands! Not just strong hands. Not clever hands. Not hands that belong to the ironic line there. Oh, no. Not at all. Clean hands. And a pure heart. God's basic requirement for us, my dear, is not cleverness, but cleanliness.

I was giving an invitation one time at a great corps in Canada, where they have the finest songster brigades in the world, and one of the best bands. And I gave an invitation that morning and to our astonishment a lot of people came to the altar. A little unusual. There were 25 or 30 people kneeling at the altar. And they hadn't seen anything like that for a long time. And don't say I'm saying this because I had anything to do with it. I didn't. I had nothing to do with it. It was my Father working. But I noticed out of the corner of my eye, the lovely, handsome, young solo cornetist in the band - a fine, young man. And there he sat. And I noticed him sitting on the platform with his cornet in his hands and his head bowed. And in a few moments I saw him get up and walk out to the altar. And the interesting thing about it was, he brought his cornet with him. And I watched that boy there as he knelt at the altar with this beautiful thing in his hands. And then there's a gesture that brought tears to my eyes. I saw him put his cornet on the altar, and he leaned back a little bit, looking at it. And then I saw him look at his hands. And in a little while, I saw him get up again. Nobody had spoken to him and I was so thankful. You know, sometimes we can do far more harm than good at the penitent form, when we try to help people who don't need help. And sometimes we get in the way of the Holy Spirit when he wants to say something or do something and he can't, because we're so blundering and what we're so anxious to do, and can't do. But anyhow, he got up and picked up his cornet and went back again.

Now I found out something about him afterwards. He's a very skillful young cornetist. But somebody told me, you could never understand, it's almost unbelievable, the difference in the tone that comes from his instrument now. Did you hear it? The tone that comes, there's something that comes, because his hands are clean. God can use skillful hands. But if that's all, then the result is “sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.” But if the hands are clean, it's amazing what God can do with any kind of an instrument. Somebody said to me of one of our great cornetists, somebody said, “You could hear the words dropping out of the bell of his instrument.” Did you hear it? When he plays some simple, old hymn tune, and after all, that's the real test of what a real cornetist can do, not what he does with Jubilate,³ but what he does with a simple hymn tune, that's the real test. It's the real test of a band, too. Not what they do with movements from Tchaikovsky, what they do with some simple hymn tune, that's the real test of it. That's the real test. And here is this lovely thing, “And the words dropping out of the bell of the instrument.” You see.

And you know, my dear, that's what God wants to do with every one of our lives, because we're instruments in his hands. We are all part of that which he is building, that which he is using. We're all part of it. We're in the house, thank God. We're all useful, thank God. But sometimes, God would feign have us on the gold and silver level if we would just let him. And the reason why we stay down on the one rather than the other, is not a matter of cleverness, it's a matter of cleanliness.

Now one of your difficult tasks is to convince some wooden Christian that he ought to move up to the gold and silver level. And that in doing it, that he ought to abandon the thing that keeps him down on the low level - the unclean thing. Now you know, from practical experience how difficult that is, don't you? Because you've probably tried it sometime, and sometimes when we try that we get into trouble.

³ A famous musical composition arranged for only the most advanced of instrumentalists.

Because one of the difficulties about the wood and earthenware level is that folks down there on that level don't want to move anywhere else. And they don't appreciate it when you try to move them up, either. Not at all. They're quite content to be down there - contented to be Christianettes. We've got a lot of them. Just contented. They don't want to be disturbed. They don't want to move. And they don't want you to move them, either. And you try, and maybe sometime you'll get into trouble. That's what the Lord tries. That's what the Lord is doing all the time, wanting to move people from the wooden level to the other, and he got into trouble too, didn't he? So you have good company. That's for sure. These Christianettes that are down there.

Somebody told me that one of the grave things that's happening in the church in these days, is the preacherettes are preaching sermonettes to Christianettes. But anyhow, you run into these folks, don't you? Salvation Armyettes. We've got all kinds of them, timbrettees and one thing or another. And sometimes God has to put up with Salvation Armyettes down here on this level instead. And I think perhaps the Lord sent an old man to you today, just to remind you of that simple fact, and perhaps to encourage you to take another look at your hands. And to remind you that God's detergent is always close at hand.

God uses two detergents: the blood for our sin, and the Word for our stain. He uses both. And there's plenty of blood, my dear. And there's plenty of the water of the Word, so that we can go out from this room this afternoon with that unearthly glow upon us that will cause people to say "What manner of people are these?" And will cause you're people to say when you get back home again, it will cause them to say, "They have been with Jesus and learned of him." Clean hands and a pure heart. Did you hear it? Did you hear it? I'm wondering, my dear, at the close, I'm wondering if God has said anything to you personally. Has he? Have you taken a look at your hands? Have you? I don't mean you're professional hands. They're all right. I mean your personal hands. There's a difference, you know. Our professional hands. Oh, sure. Well, what about our personal hands, because, remember, that our precious Lord, who is looking right straight at you right now, is not at you as what you are in an organization. He is looking at you as to what you are as a child in the family of God. And for the moment, that's his interest. Because unless you are the clean child in the family of God, you won't be very much good to him elsewhere.

And perhaps one of the things that could happen in the closing moment of this meeting would be that we could take these hands of ours and put them once more under the cleansing flow of the Word of God. And that we could take these hearts of ours, and some of our hearts in this very room are stained with unconfessed sin. Now, I don't know anything about it, but He does. And so do you.

But there's unconfessed sin right in this room, right now. Nobody knows anything about it. And nobody's going to ask you, either. I don't want you to come and tell me. I can't do anything about it, but I know somebody who can. But we'd better bring that unconfessed sin, because it may make the difference between second class and first class. And that frequently happens, when unconfessed sin is brought out into the open so God can deal with it. I don't know anything about it. But He does. And so do you. And right in front of you is a place that could become an altar of prayer, right at this moment. You've got a lovely chair and a table. We can link our hands together, I mean your hand with the other one. Not with somebody else. We can put our hands together and bow our hearts. And you and I together can make this spot where we're sitting our personal penitent form.

Now, my dear, I'm not going to say any more about it. Not at all. Not at all. I'm not going to say anything more about it. But will you say something more about it, because somebody's listening. And He wants you to go back with that new, strange cleanliness that can only come and with that wonderful relief that can come out of our hearts, when something that has been hidden there is now, at long last, brought out into the open. Let God deal with it. And whatever it means to you to deal with an unconfessed sin, you face it. Because until you do, you will never be anything else but the wooden and earthenware vessel. And God wants you to be gold and silver.

There's an old chorus we used to sing long ago. I think we can sing it without accompaniment. We used to sing it. I remember it, there, where we used to sing:

Oh, wash me now, without, within
Or purge with fire, if that must be
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in thee, Die out in thee

Will you sing it quietly, and with your eyes closed. You sing it to Him. It doesn't matter that I'm listening. He's listening. That's the point of it right now. That's the point of it. He's listening. And we can sing it quietly together while you are at your own private, personal penitent form. Will you sing it with me?

Singing:

So, wash me now, without, within
Or purge with fire, if that must be
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in thee, Die out in thee

Do you mean it? Do you mean it? Because if you do, He has heard with great delight. And He knows, too, whether you mean it or not. "So wash me now, without, within." And I'll go back to my people with a new cleanliness. I'll go back to my home with a new cleanliness. I'll go back to my home with a new something there that my children will see immediately, when I get back home. They'll see something happened to Dad the last two or three days. Something happened to Mother. You don't need to explain it to them. Not at all. They'll be too busy enjoying it. They won't wait for your explanation. They don't want your explanation. They'll be too glad to enjoy the change that has come.

Singing:

So wash me now, without, within
Or purge with fire, if that must be
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in thee, Die out in thee

Prayer:

Our Father, we pray that as our heads have been bowed and our hearts have been bowed in this sacred, final moment in this room, when these dear hearts have been so intimately in touch with you. As we have knelt together at our own private, penitent form, and we have confessed to Thee, perhaps in silence, not using ordinary words at all. We just let our hearts talk with Thee and we have been saying, "Oh Lord, take these hands of mine and cleanse them afresh, so that they can render better service than ever. Perhaps do something in a different way all together. Take this heart of mine and cleanse it afresh. Take this mind of mine and cleanse it afresh. Take my feet, we pray Thee, and wash them so that I may go on errands of mercy, unhindered by stain of any kind." And so we pray, our Father, that as we bring this service to a close in this precious and beautiful room, that the prayer of our hearts shall not only be heard, but answered, and that each one of us may be thanking God within the deeps of our hearts for that which He provided for us. His marvelous, transforming touch that can change wood into gold. Help us to go back, we pray Thee, to the place that Thou hast called us to as vessels of honor, gold and silver, meet for the master's use. In Jesus name, Amen.

And our dear colonel is going to lead us in a song that I've asked him to lead. And I think you will enjoy it as the closing moment of this service. (Audio ends.)