

THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

II Timothy – Two Messages

Delivered to The Gospel Tabernacle – Birmingham, Alabama. Circa 1972.

Editorial Note: In 1972, Sidney Cox moved from Detroit, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama to be near my parents, John and Jean Cox. He was 85 years of age at the time, but remained in remarkable health and lived on his own in a small apartment in Birmingham.

He remained in great demand as a preacher and Bible teacher. He had a well-chronicled career early in his life as a Salvation Army officer from 1910 – 1944. Later in life, he developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). From 1956 – 1962, he served on the theological faculty of two institutions that were close aligned with CMA – the Miami Bible Institute and the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute. Both the Salvation Army and CMA continued to invite him to preach and teach during this phase of his life.

These two messages were part of a series of messages on the New Testament book of II Timothy delivered circa 1972 to The Gospel Tabernacle, a Birmingham CMA congregation in Birmingham.

The audio quality for Message Two is compromised, but audible. The quality of the audio is worsened because Sidney Cox was over 85 years of age when he delivered these messages and though his voice was strong, his diction was beginning to decline, and as you will note, he had begun to slur his words slightly.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. November, 2010.

Message One

First of all, let’s take a look at the book itself. But before we do it, I want you to remember that in studying a book like that, you always approach it with three things, or three people in mind: One, the man who wrote it. Don’t forget it. The man to whom it was written. And, the people for whom it was written. And that’s where we come in, because Paul wrote a letter and he sent it to young Timothy and in that letter he said to Timothy, “What I have said to you (beginning in the second chapter), you pass on to faithful men who would in turn teach others also.” And somebody has been bringing it down to us until finally a letter that originated in the damp darkness of a Roman dungeon now comes to us and it faces us. It will come and sit right down beside you and I’m hoping that its message and its company will be right sweet to each one of us.

Now, let me remind you again that this is a remarkable book in four ways. Now, here you can make some notes if you want to: four different ways in which II Timothy is a remarkable book.

- First of all, there are 29 people mentioned in that little book. 29 names. Now, that is most extraordinary because you can go through some of the books and find scarcely a name mentioned. But, here in this book, a man evidently under the impulse and the pressure of sending out his last message - if he's going to name somebody, he better do it now, he'd never have another chance. A little while after he said, "Amen," in this book, his head was lopped off by a Roman executioner's ax. If he is to say anything about anybody, he'd better say it now. Now, that's the first thing: there are 29 names in this book that Paul emphasizes and underscores and many of them you have already met,
- But second point: there are 12 people mentioned in II Timothy that have not been mentioned and you will not find them elsewhere. Twelve people.
- Now, again, here's is an unusual fact: Dr. W. Graham Scroggie, one of our greatest Bible teachers, made this statement and it all adds up to a sense of urgency: Paul is doing something for the last time, he'll never have an opportunity to do it again and in this letter, listen to it, he uses 77 words that he has not used in any of his previous letters. This thing is so important that words are employed and come pouring out of the great apostle that he has not used anywhere else. Now dear, I can't prove that, but it's interesting when we get it from a source such as I have mentioned. When you read W. Graham Scroggie, you have almost the last word in Bible instructors. He's the top of the tree and he says that in the letter there 77 words that Paul has not used elsewhere. Now there are three facts: 29 names, 12 of them that have not been used before, 77 words that have not appeared in any of his letters previously. Now that's three.
- Now, here's the most important thing, and it fastens onto our consciousness, the thought. This is a tremendously important thing and a great man is writing his last message. Now, that's the important [thing]. This is Paul's last letter. Now, my dear, last things are always important. Don't forget that as we read together, and we shall in a moment read Chapter 1, Verses 1-8, when we shall read it together, but don't forget that when we do so you are listening to the last words of somebody.

By the way dear, have you ever listened to the last words of somebody? Have you ever bent over somebody, somebody perhaps dearer to you than your own life and you listen to a last word? Have you? Now my dear, whatever you forgot, you didn't forget that. Those last words, you remember them, of course. Here's a man who is writing his last words. He'll never write again.

Strange that it should be so, because from this point on, from II Timothy on, you don't meet the Apostle Paul again. There is only one incidental reference to him from this point on and you can find it in II Peter 3:15 where Peter says, "Our brother Paul wrote some things difficult to understand." But isn't that true? And it seems almost unbelievable, wouldn't it. We've gone all the way through the New Testament and the most prominent character, after the flesh, is this man. Everywhere we look we see him; everywhere we listen, we hear the sound of his voice; and now suddenly we've got to the end of the road and we're not going to hear him or see him again until someday we meet him. Now that's important. Last things are always important.

If you were writing a last letter to some friend of yours, what would you say? Well, I'll tell you some things you wouldn't say: You wouldn't bother to tell them about your arthritis, you wouldn't bother to talk about the weather, you wouldn't bother about secondary things at all, would you? You would concentrate on primary things, things of primary importance because you would be saying, "I shall never have a chance to write again." A last letter? This is what we are studying tonight, a last letter that comes from the damp darkness of this Roman prison situation.

Now my dear, the writer then is before us and it's the Apostle Paul and the receiver is a young man at the other end of the line upon whose shoulders the main responsibility for the, "The care of the churches." Now, note that phrase because that's important. I'm quoting there from Paul himself when I remind you of the phrase, "The care of the churches."

Now, here is a young man in his early thirties probably, maybe a little more than that, but still a very young man, and on his shoulders is going to fall the terrible responsibility for the care of the churches. Now, don't forget that the care of the churches is something that Paul wrote about and it ages a man because don't forget that Paul, six years before he wrote II Timothy, wrote a letter to Philemon, and in that letter he speaks of himself as, "Paul the Aged," and he was only sixty years old then; he died about sixty-six. Surely that isn't old! Don't tell me that's old or I'll be discouraged. That isn't old, surely. But anyhow, the thing that ages a man like Paul is not the travel or the persecution or the pain he had to suffer, it is, "the care of the churches" - the weight and responsibility that comes down on the shoulders of a preacher. And I want to tell you my dear, that unless you've been in that position, it's a weight and responsibility that is almost indescribable. You are aware that it's there, but the weight of it can only be realized when you experience it.

Now, here's a man writing to a young man who is going to carry a burden like that. A young man who knows what the end of the line will be for him. He knows very well that this letter is marking the end of his association with the Apostle Paul. He had leaned on him constantly for years and years and years and now he's going, and the whole responsibility not only in Ephesus, where he was a young Bishop, but of the whole Christian Church is now to fall on the shoulders of this young man, Timothy; and he knew what the end of the line would be. He wasn't looking for increase in his salary or fringe benefits of any kind, all Timothy was looking for was the very same thing that Paul was looking for and everybody else that became a Christian in those days knew that that was the probable end of things. He knew what the end would be and yet, in spite of it, here's a young man, fine and magnificent and splendid, on whose shoulders an old man is now putting the responsibility for the care of the churches.

Under those conditions, what do you think Paul would say to him? When we realize this, the background of it, what this thing involves, then we ought to be on the edge of our chairs and waiting to see and anticipating what this man would say to a young man under those conditions. If you were imparting your life's work onto some young fellow who was to carry on after you are gone, what would you say to him? Well, you'd say more than just a pat on the back and, "keep your chin up" and so on. And in this letter we've got the final instructions to a young man who is now to carry on.

Now, not only do we have the man who wrote it, and the young man who received it - and don't forget that young Timothy is quite different to the other men that were associated with the Apostle Paul, like Titus for instance, in this respect: we do not know anything about the childhood of any of the others who were associates of the Apostle Paul but this one. Now, we know something about young Timothy's childhood. We know the kind of home into which he was born. We know the name of his grandmother and of his mother and we know something of his father, not much, because the only reference to Timothy's father, and I'm talking now about the young man who received the letter, the only reference to Timothy's father is found in Acts 16:1 and this is what it says, "But his father was a Greek," now that's all - not one word about him either before or afterwards, not a word. I've sometimes wondered about that. How come this lovely Jewish girl who believed, according to that verse at the beginning of the 16th Chapter of Acts, "She was a Jewess who believed, but his father was a Greek." How did that happen? There must have been some breaking down or relaxing of the barriers. How could a young woman who believed, of Jewish origin, marry a man who was a Greek? Well, I only suggest it, you can ponder it if you want to, it's not an important point, but it's one of the little things of interest as we go along.

The purpose of this letter is to show Timothy the importance of living the Christian life. Now, that may sound like a commonplace phrase, but it's a fundamental thing. The most difficult task, the most important task that any of us face is living the Christian life. We hold seminars, I don't like that word, "Seminar," do you? We hold a seminar about something or another. Somebody said, "If you are going to have a 'nar,' why don't you have a whole one?" But it's one of those words we borrowed from the "half baked world" outside, this word "seminar." But we hold seminars about this and that and the other, but the fundamental thing that we ought to be studying is the fine art of living the Christian life, because without that, the rest of it all falls to pieces.

We sometimes spend our time, and rightly so, studying to be fine Sunday School teachers, or what have you, but the fundamental thing about a Sunday School teacher is not the lesson she teaches, but the life that is back of it, that's the fundamental thing. The fundamental thing about a home situation with father and mother and children is not what you say to those children, but the life that's back of it, that's the important thing. And in this letter, Paul is saying to Timothy, "Whatever you do, don't forget that what you are is more important than what you do." Shall I say that again? That would be worth repeating. Put that in a letter that you are going to write to somebody. This "old codger" who came here as our Bible teacher, one of the things he said in that opening day of class was, "What we are is more important than what we do." And Paul is saying to Timothy all the way through here, "What we are is more important than what we do." You must live the Christian life, that's the fundamental thing because what you do in the exercise of your authority must be backed up by the life that you live. And all the way through this letter, final things remember, not just secondary things, however important they may be, but in the final things he's saying, "Timothy, your first great responsibility is living the Christian life. You live that Christian life there in that church where you are located in Ephesus."

I'll tell you one incident and then we'll stop because time, according to the clock says, "Just about that time." Let me tell you one incident: One of the things that I liked to do when we lived in Detroit, a rather strange thing, whenever I had a Sunday night free, which wasn't very often, I used to spend my Sunday night, my free Sunday night, in what is called The Harbor Light Corps

of the Salvation Army. And I'll tell you what that is: it's the place where hopeless folks gather and I'd have 300 men before me on that Sunday night to chat with them or talk with them or sing to them or something of the kind – 300 of them - the dregs of humanity. And one day they asked me to go and do a Bible conference with them. Now, if you had an assignment like that, what would you talk about, because they are not ordinary Sunday School scholars, they weren't raised in the Alliance Church, not at all. They are a million miles away from what you are. What would you say?

Well, I was pondering that and then one day as I was thinking about it, this old memory of mine clicked and I remembered what the Chaplain in the Atlanta Penitentiary had said to me sometime before when I was to speak to the convicts there that morning, and I said to him, "Chaplain, what will these men listen to? What do they want to know? In what way can you reach them? What is it that they will listen to?" And you know, he looked at me and he said, "First of all, they want to know two things: one, what has God done for you and second, can he do the same thing for me, and how?" You know, that was a startler, because the Chaplain didn't say they want to know how much you know about the Bible, or how good a singer you are, or whether you've got any letters at the end of your name, or what your pedigree is, or what church you belong to. They don't give a hoot about that. But sixteen hundred eyes would be turned toward me as I sat on the platform, or stood on it, that morning, and every last one of them would be asking, "What has God done for you?" And the Chaplain said, "If they are convinced that God has done something for you, then you can say anything you want to them. They will listen to anything you have to say if they are convinced that God has done something good."

And old Paul is writing to Timothy and he is saying, "Timothy, you have a lot of responsibilities, but don't forget that the big responsibility is living that luminous Christian life before everybody, and if you do that, if folks are convinced that God has done something for you, you can say anything you please." And so can you in this church, and in your home, and among your friends.

Message Two

In this final letter, and I'm starting at the end of it there, one of the things he does - there are two things he does that are very important: One, he gives his testimony for the last time. Now my dear, if you were writing a letter or if you were in a meeting here at The Gospel Tabernacle, and you knew that you would not have a chance to say a word about Jesus again, what would you say? If you knew that your testimony, now given, was the very last thing you'd say about Him, what would you say? I'm not going to suggest it. What would you say?

Well, I know what Paul said because he did two important things knowing that the end was just around the corner: He gave his testimony and he told Timothy the glorious things of his relationship to the Lord and what it meant. He says, "The time of my departure is at hand." Now my dear, that word, "The time of my departure," is a word used when a ship was leaving the dock and going on a long journey. We don't use it of a ship in these days, but if you go to the airport, anywhere, you will find "the time of departure" is facing you everywhere you look. Time of departure. The time had come. Paul, long before that had said, "To be with Jesus is far better," but now he has reached the end of the line and he knows that within a very short time, he'll be gone and the Old Ship of Zion is there at the dock waiting, and Paul is stepping aboard

and the orchestra is playing *Anchors Away* and Paul is on his way home again and he says, “The time of my departure is at hand.”

Now, he says something else that’s very interesting: he said not only, “The time of my departure is at hand,” but he said, “I have finished my course.” Now listen dear, this thing is talking to you and to me. If you should be called to leave here and go there anytime soon, do you know the biggest file that you would take with you? It would be a file marked “Unfinished Business.” When you can find somebody who says, “I have finished my course,” - it reminds us of somebody else, doesn’t it? “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” We couldn’t say that. You couldn’t say it. I couldn’t. I couldn’t. Somebody said that the greatest philosophical argument for immortality is the unfinished tasks of earth. Somebody said, “There must be another life so that we can finish what we did not finish down here.” Now, here’s a man who said, “I have finished my course.” No unpaid bills left behind, nothing for other people to straighten out when he’d gone, not at all. No apologies for others to make for him, not at all. No unconfessed sin at this moment. Did you hear it? Did you hear? “I have finished my course.”

Now again, he says, “I have kept the faith.” And don’t forget that is a two-sided coin because the one who keeps the faith finds that the faith keeps him, too. Did you hear it? That might be worth noting, that the faith keeps Paul. “I have kept the faith,” and Paul kept the faith and the faith kept him. There is an old song we use to sing years and years ago along this line. It had been (inaudible) and it said, “I hold not the rock, but the rock holds me, the rock holds me.” Do you remember it? Some of you old “gray beards,” you will remember it probably, but we hold not the faith, but the faith holds us. And Paul says, “I have kept the faith.”

Now, notice as we go along with this study, you’ll find that that final word is an introduction to something that Paul constantly reiterates when he’s writing to young Timothy, and he saying to young Timothy, “Your responsibility is to look after this gift of God that is in thee, and you take care of it and it is your responsibility.” By the way, do you remember the word that we said last night about the subject of each of these chapters? Chapter One: The responsibilities of the Christian life. Chapter Two: The seriousness of the Christian life. Chapter Three: Dangers to the Christian life. Chapter Four: The rewards of the Christian life.

“I have kept the faith. Timothy, your big job is to keep that fire of faith burning brightly. The fire of faith that came to you first through your grandmother, Lois, and then through your mother, Eunice, and I am persuaded that it is in thee also.” “I have kept the faith.” “I have finished my course.” These final words, how wonderful they are, “And henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” And I know, and you know, that when Paul received that crown of righteousness, I know what he did with it, and so do you, he would cast it at the feet of Him who gave it to him.

The writer of the lovely old song, “The Sands of Time Are Sinking,” you’ll probably find it in your book and if it isn’t there, there is something wrong with the book. There is something wrong with any book that doesn’t have in it, “The Sands of Time Are Sinking,” but the last verse of that song by Samuel Rutherford said:

“The Bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom’s face;

I will not gaze at glory but on my King of grace.
 Not at the crown He giveth but on His pierced hand;
 The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land."

And my dear, you can be quite sure that if and when and in whatever form, a crown was ever given to Paul, you can be quite sure what he did with it or what he didn't do with it, he would cast it at the feet of Him who gave it to him.

I sometimes wonder what happened when Paul got home. Have you ever thought of it? When that old ship of Zion arrived home and Paul stepped off into the glory of being there, his Lord (inaudible). I wonder in that day when final things are there, I wonder who met Paul? On the golden street, somebody would meet him and say, "You are the one. You are the one." There are folks in this room tonight who will say to Paul when you meet him in the glory, "You are the one who wrote the Epistle to the Romans and it involved somebody's teaching "When I came out of darkness into light."¹ You put your own word there but there are those in this room tonight who would still be in darkness but for the fact that Paul said something that could let sacred light and fire in our hearts.

"I have finished the course." I wonder, will somebody meet you when you get there? Who will meet you on the golden street and say, "You were the one. You were my Sunday School teacher. You said a word there in that Sunday School class that went down into my heart. You didn't know about it. You didn't think you had done anything, but that word stayed there, and years afterwards and in another circumstance altogether, the Holy Spirit gripped that thing that you had planted in my heart and it led me out of darkness into light," and someday they'll meet you on the golden street.

The same man that wrote, *The Sands of Time Are Sinking* wrote a verse about that in a parsonage in a little Scottish church in a town called Anwoth, and he wrote this:

"If but one soul from Anwoth meets me at God's right hand, my heaven will be two heavens in Emmanuel's land."

My dear, if there is one soul from somewhere over and around Birmingham, meets you at God's right hand, your heaven will be increased proportionately in Emmanuel's land.

This is an old man giving his testimony. He made his Will as well. He didn't have much to leave, and by the way, he left it all, just like you will. Have you made your Will, by the way? Don't play around with that, these days are too serious. Paul made his Will. It's in this you can see what he left behind. He left an old secondhand overcoat and some books and parchments. You know, he was at liberty for quite some time and finally in Troas, the Roman authorities caught up with him and arrested him so rudely and so suddenly that they didn't even give him a chance to carry with him his old secondhand overcoat. He left a secondhand overcoat and a few books and his parchments.

¹ | Peter 2:9.

I wonder what he did with the rest of the stuff? He had been in the ministry for 35 years, surely he had something to leave behind. What did he do with his summer cottage and his motorboat and his golf clubs and his overstuffed furniture and his wall-to-wall carpets and that big 'ole television set that isn't paid for yet? I wonder what he did with all - and don't look at me and say these things are not important because, dear, there is nobody here but us. We spend three-fourths of our life acquiring those things and the other quarter of our life discovering that they're not worth having anyhow. Did you hear it? A man left it all and all he had was an old secondhand overcoat and his books and his parchments. That probably be in capital letters. But my, what riches on the other side. What riches on the other side. Is it saying something to you? Is it saying something to you? This old man (inaudible) not even what he said in his letter, but what he did, that final testimony and his Will that he left behind. But my, that man has been enriching lives like yours and mine for almost two thousand years and if time goes on, he will be enriching lives as long as there are lives to be enriched, just like yours and mine. A man like this.

And you know these things come before us, these pictures, these miniatures, in order that we might not only look at them, but stand beside them and measure ourselves by them. That's the purpose of it, not merely to see what Paul did, but to ask ourselves the question, "What about me?" What would you leave behind? What? What would you leave behind? Well, there's one thing for sure, my dear, you will leave it all. There is nothing that you will take with you except the eternal things that have eternal value. You'll need them again. Nothing else will matter.

Now, my dear, let me remind you of one or two other things and then we'll come to a conclusion because as you are leaving, you can be following up this thought: I want you to notice as we go through this book that things occur in series of threes. Look for things occurring in series of threes. I'll give you some illustrations. You've already had one. Brother _____ reminded us of something that a great writer said about II Timothy: it was a letter from an old man to a young man about the God man. Three, you've got three characters in verse one: the writer and the receiver and the one about whom we are writing.

Now, let me remind you of this. That was said by a great English writer, one of the great English Keswick figures, Canon Guy King.² Now this will interest you folks that are members of this church. Years ago, I was conducting a meeting in this city and the pastor and I were walking down the street toward the old Gospel Tabernacle and on the way we were discussing books, and this man said to me quietly, "Have you discovered Guy King?" And I said, "No." He said, "I'll tell you where you can find a copy of Guy King's book on II Timothy, which is called, *To My Son*. And do you know that we went into the bookstore that use to be somewhere in the old tabernacle. You use to have a bookstore there, didn't you? And I bought my copy of that book, forty years ago, in the old bookstore in the old tabernacle, right here. Guy King. If you haven't discovered him, find him. That book of his is worth its weight in gold. *To My Son*. You'll probably get it in the Booknook or somewhere else and one of the nice things about it is that it wouldn't cost you much; it's not an expensive thing. You buy a book these days, you've almost got to mortgage your house and lot to buy it, haven't you? Because (inaudible) is skyrocketing

² Canon Guy H. King was an English Episcopalian who became a noted Biblical author. One of his many books was on the New Testament book of II Timothy and was entitled, *To My Son*. Sidney Cox was very fond of Guy King and his writings, and referenced King in many of his sermons and lessons on New Testament subjects.

in the midst of this strange situation we're facing, but that's not an expensive book, and you will thank God to the last day you live if you're interested in things like this. You will thank God for that. Guy King and the title of the book, *To My Son*. Now, you make a note of that.

Now, there is the first three: The old man to the young man about the God man.

Now, I want you to notice something else: immediately following it, we read the words, "Grace, mercy, and peace," three again. By the way, you will only find that threefold salutation in what we call the "Pastoral Epistles." It's nearly always, "Grace and peace be with you," but to Timothy and Titus you will find it, "grace, mercy, and peace." He adds that beautiful word, "Mercy." Now my dears, don't forget that "Mercy" is a different word altogether to "grace and peace." "Mercy" is a word that is used only on those who are deeply concerned about their sin.

One of things that disturbs me, and I've been in this business for a lot longer than most of you have lived, and I see all kinds of things in the meetings that we've conducted, particularly in hours of prayer, and I see folks by the dozens who come and get something that they call "salvation," without being concerned about their sin at all. It's questionable if their sin ever bothered them except in that moment when they get into trouble because of it. When it becomes an inconvenience, you see. They're all (inaudible) a concern about sin. A man in the back of the temple and he said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Now, mercy and misery both come from the same source. And when you keep that in mind, don't forget that there is no misery that is so disturbing as misery that comes because of a consciousness of our sin. And the word, "Mercy," is given to folks only who are conscious of and deeply disturbed about their sin. Mercy. Grace, mercy, and peace.

How observant are you? In what way are those words all alike, "Grace, mercy, and peace?" Say it again. There are five letters in each one of them. Have you noticed that nearly all the words in connection with redemption are five-letter words? Nearly all of them. Now there is nothing important about this. It's just an interesting point as we go along. The words, "Jesus, cross, blood, faith, trust" and you could go on and on. I have a friend who said he discovered 32 words in connection with our redemption, and every last one of them are five-letter words. Grace, mercy, peace. And an old man lifts his hands from the depths of a lonely prison cell and writes a letter and in it he says, "Grace, mercy, and peace."

Now my dear, just let me give you one other of these threefold things and then we'll close.

You will find at the beginning of every one of Paul's letters, with one exception, these three things: thanksgiving, remembrance, and prayer. At the beginning of every letter and very often between all three of them is one verse – maybe in one sentence, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making a request with joy." Where did I quote from there? Not from this letter, although I might have done, because the same thing is there. I quoted from Paul's letter to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy."

Would you like a little incidental homework that doesn't belong to this class? Try this. Read the first few chapters of Philippians and find how many times Paul says "You'all". Now that ought

to be of interest to Bible believing Southerners. You'll be amazed how many times Paul says You'all. I don't know how he said it, whether he said it as two words or whether he said it as we do, as one – "Y'all". But anyhow, you'll find it there and you'll be amazed how many times. It's a little incidental moment for a little theological amusement's all right. You'll find it there. "Thanksgiving, remembrance and prayer." And I'll tell you, that's the place where I'm going to start tomorrow night.