

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

Job – Sermon 4 of 4: *When God Speaks*

**Editorial Note: What follows is one of a series of four sermons delivered by Sidney Cox on the Book of Job.**

**I do not know the church at which this series of sermons was delivered. Based upon the presence of his wife, Violet (who died in 1967), and his reference to their upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I would date this sermon circa 1965, at which time they were living in Detroit, Michigan. Sidney Cox would have been 78 years of age in 1965.**

**In this series of sermons, we see Sidney Cox, the Bible scholar and teacher as opposed to Sidney Cox, the preacher and evangelist. Also of note, this series is perhaps the only teachings of Sidney Cox from the Old Testament of which I have knowledge. During his life, his message to others primarily focused on New Testament themes: the living Christ and the love of God found in His son, Christ Jesus.**

**John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. August, 2009.**

So, let's just turn with me please, to the thirty-eighth chapter of the book of Job. The book of Job, the thirty-eighth chapter. Now just a moment of review, and then we'll stop and have a word of prayer, and then go one step further along the line.

When we began on Sunday night, we knew that we could only touch the fringes, the edges, of a subject as vast as this. A book as tremendous as this one, we knew we'd only be able to touch it lightly here and there. That we have sought to do.

Our first night out we began by talking together about the man whose name is here, and the book, bearing the name of the man. When we speak of the book of Job, we have two things - the book and the man. And on Sunday night, we began by talking a little bit, a few preliminary things about the man himself, and then some things of interest I trust, regarding the book that bears his name.

Now, on Monday night, we went one step further and sought to see the plot, if you like to use that word, that's not a good word, but the way in which this drama - that's what this book of Job is - the way in which it unfolds before us. The characters that appear. The way in which they, it appears. The circumstances surrounding it. The stage setting of it, if you care to use those words. What is the plot of it? What is it all about? What is the theme of it? How does it develop? What are the great things said in this book? We were looking at it from that point of view.

And of course in considering that, we naturally came to this conclusion, as everyone does studying this book, that it has one central problem in it. Not merely the problem of suffering, but the deeper problem of why the righteous suffer? Because remember that the man we're talking about is marked by three

things: he is rich, and respected, and righteous. And we are considering, last night particularly, why do the righteous suffer?

Now, we turn to varied parts of the Word of God, and then came back to the book of Job finally with this concluding thought: there is no answer in the book of Job to the great problem of why the righteous suffer. God did not give the answer to that question. He did not give any explanation regarding the mystery surrounding suffering Job, this rich, respected, righteous man.

Then, if God did not give an answer, and if he did not give an explanation, what did he give? Now that's our theme for tonight. And it will be found centering, circling around these words, "When God Spoke to Job." What did God say? What was the theme of this final word that we hear?

Now, let's stop and have a word of prayer, and then we'll go on one step further along the line.

*Our Father we give Thee thanks tonight for the goodness of the Lord that has surrounded us. For the goodness of God that has been ours from all eternity. That we gather here tonight, not merely to keep an appointment, that is from the calendar of this church, but to keep an appointment with God. Thou hast called us together. We are here by royal appointment. Thou didst precede us into this room, whether we thought of Thee or not. Thou didst wait to welcome us, as we came tonight to study Thy word. Thou didst not only provide us with the Word, given by mind and heart and Thy purpose, but Thou didst give to us, and we give Thee thanks, the Holy Spirit who will guide us in our thinking, who will Himself be the interpreter, who will bring out of it the glory of God, and the honor of Him whose name is above every name. And so we pray that we may be listening, that we may be teachable, that God may find delight in leading us step by step into the green pastures of this book. And that we may find something that we may hide away in our hearts for our spiritual enrichment, that we may listen to what God has to say. Not only to Job in the long ago, not only to a congregation, but what God has to say to me. And we pray that we may be listening. Speak Lord, (long pause) for thy servants are listening. In Jesus name. Amen.*

Now, let's go on one step further, if you please with this thought that lies before us. We've been listening, either actually, or we have had before our eyes, this rather pathetic section of dialogue between Job and his friends. Now remember that by far the greatest portion of this book is taken up with this dialogue section. Right from the beginning until you come here to chapter thirty-eight, you find you are listening to human voices and they are all bringing their contribution, their effort, to the solution of the problem, why would a man like Job suffer? Now, they all approach it, all four of them, approach it from one central point of view. They do not all deal with it in exactly the same way. One deals with it from the standpoint of the scientist. One from the moralist. One from the standpoint of the traditionalist. One merely takes his place as the young man, without any label on him at all, and merely approaches it in a much kinder way than any of the others.

We watched two things going on. One, the man talking to Job. Second, Job answering the man. And you could hear the sting in the words of the man talking to Job, and you could hear the sting again as Job replies. And you can hear this backward and forward movement, and it occupies hundreds, nearly thousands of words; this effort to think their way into this problem of why the righteous suffer. Now, they have only one point of view, and that is that suffering is always the result of sin. Now the sting in their approach to this lies in this fact, that they all recognize Job as a righteous man. Consequently, the sin that must have caused the suffering, was not on the outside, it was hidden away somewhere on the

inside. And each one of them, in his own way, pointed an accusing finger to Job with this thought in it - there is somewhere within your life, hidden sin. This suffering would never have come any other way, could not have come any other way. The only reason why God would send suffering there upon a man such as Job would be that there was something hidden away in the inner recesses of his life that demanded this kind of treatment. God was doing justice to Job in treating him thus because there was hidden away in his heart something that was evil. Now, that was their point of view, and it goes backwards and forward.

When we come to the last of these speeches, he speaks by the young man, Elihu, you find much more tenderness than in these previous speeches. You find much more reasonableness. Elihu can see something more than just the plain facts, that suffering always comes because of sin. We can see something of educational value in suffering. That perhaps God is doing something through suffering. He faintly glimpses this idea. But the main central fact of it all is, and it takes thousands of words to gather it together, Job must be in some way a sinner. And God is dealing with him on that basis.

Now, you can hear, too, certain things that shock you as you listen. And some of it are these things - Job not only turns in irritated railing sometimes against the friends that are talking to him, but he says some things about God that are shocking. Every once in a while you hear something come out of the heart, the life from the lips of this tormented man, in which he turns his eyes to the skies in a vain effort to discover God somewhere near, and there comes out of his heart and from his lips expressions that are shocking. Now let's keep these things in mind as we go along. This then is the beginning of it.

Now, I want you to visualize, if you will, this scene once more. Job in the midst of his suffering. Job in the midst of his perplexities. His older friends have said what they have to say, and have withdrawn a little bit to one side if not sadly parted all together. The young man, Elihu, has been talking to him. And, Elihu is now coming to the end of what he has to say. But while that's happening, there is something else that can be seen in the sky. As this dialogue has been going on, clouds have been gathering in the sky. And as the words pile one upon another, so the clouds are piling one upon another. And there in the sky, there is, you can see flashes of lightening. You can hear the echo of distant thunder. You can hear the sweep of gathering wind forces. And they know something tremendous is about to happen. And it's right, something tremendous did happen. For right at the trail of these earthly dialogues and these human speeches, there breaks upon them with cyclonic force a whirlwind that seems to sweep everything away before it. Now, the voice of a whirlwind is bad enough. It's powerful enough. But there's a voice that is greater, more powerful than the voice of any whirlwind that ever struck the earth. It is the voice of God himself. And the strange, mysterious thing that we are now to look at, and now to listen to, is that out of the midst of the whirl of the whirlwind, there came the voice of God himself. This voice, like the sound of many waters. God speaks.

Now, I want you to notice two things. One is that scattered through the scripture, you will find this tremendous fact set before us. God speaks. Turn to the first of Genesis and you will find God is speaking, "Let there be light," and there was light. The greatest thing that happens in the first part of Genesis is the sound of God's voice. You can turn to the beginning of John, and you'll find the same thing, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, out of the Word comes God's voice." Jesus is the voice of God, the expression of the thought of God. God makes himself known and audible and understandable in the person of his Son. Turn to the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews and you find the same thing, "God who in such sundry times and in diverse

manners has spoken in times past by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son.” The most terrible thing that’s happened in the Fall was the means of communication between God and man was broken. And God’s heart has longed to reestablish it every once in a while. All the way through, you see the flashes of it.

Now, in his Son is the permanent means of communication. God does not require anybody else anymore. God speaks through his Son. He does not need the feeble echoes or a woman out of Boston, or anybody else, when God speaks. He doesn’t need the golden tablets that Joseph Smith discovered. He doesn’t need the vaporings of Mrs. E.G. White.<sup>1</sup> When God speaks through his Son, that is sufficient! God speaks. This is the tremendous thing. The fact that we have been watching about, watching here and considering, is God’s voice speaking in general. But God not only speaks in general, but God speaks in particular. And in this particular point, you have God condescending to speak particularly to one man.

Now, let’s remember something else. That God did not speak at all, until human voices had ceased. God did not interrupt this dialogue. He does not seek to get a word in while others talk, not at all. He never does. He never does. When human voices cease, God speaks. It would be well for us to remember that sometimes. Our means of communication between ourselves and God are frequently cluttered up with our own words. And God seeks to get a word in to us. But he will not interrupt us. He will speak when we stop talking. If we would do less talking and more listening, God could do more talking to us. God speaks. But he doesn’t speak until human voices cease. Now, that’s the next thing we see.

Now another of the considerations, as we go along here is this thought - let me repeat it again, we’ve said it over and over again. The book says it over and over again. No explanation is given definitely, distinctly, as to the means, the reasons for suffering. God does not give explanations. Not at all. Now, if that is the case, then what does God give. What does he give? In speaking to Job, what will God say? What subject will he discuss with him? Will he not discuss and explain to him the meaning of suffering?

Now one of the things that has been said about this book of Job is, it is a work of fiction. Quite a large group of those who may bear a similar name to our own, call themselves the followers of the Lord, have questioned the authenticity of this book: it is a fiction story, a drama in the same way that any other drama may be written. But, let me remind you of this, that if a human being was clever enough - perhaps I should use the word “gigantic” enough to bring in to being a thing like this and propound and deal with a subject as vast as the mystery of suffering, and spread it out before us, as it is spread out in this book, would he not in the nature of things give the answer to the riddle he has propounded? Now, one of the evidences that this is not a human book is the fact that the answer to the riddle is not there. It is not given. Now any human author bringing such a thing as this to pass, dealing with a problem like this, and dealing with it in the way in which it has been done here, would in the nature of things crown his effort by explaining the meaning of the conundrum, the mystery, the riddle. Of course, he would. But there isn’t any explanation here.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen Gould White (November 26, 1827 – July 16, 1915) was an American Christian leader whose ministry was instrumental in founding the Sabbatarian Adventist movement that led to the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Now, when you come to this last part and you hear God speaking. And for just a moment I'd like to read for you a few of the things that God says. Now remember, this is the high point of light in this book. And this book is perhaps the high point of literature in all the scripture. It is questionable if anything greater has ever been written than these words that we are now to hear, and I shall only read a few of them. But I hope before you get through tonight, before you rest tonight, you read chapters thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty, forty-one of the book of Job, and hear what God says.

Listen.

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.”<sup>2</sup>

Notice it isn't God giving Job an answer. It's God asking questions of Job and demanding any answer from Job. Notice the pattern of it.

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or, who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or, who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? Declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? And as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? Or because the number of thy days is great? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail...”<sup>3</sup>

And we'll stop, although I'd like to go on. I think that's more beautiful than anything you'll hear, but we'll just stop. And you read the rest of it, will you?

This is God talking. God's intimate voice. What is it that we hear? Remember? God talking to Job. This is what we hear. God asking Job questions. Some of them seem...as if they might...be boarding on reproof, as if God is dealing with a little child. Some of the questions that God asks of Job. For instance he asks, “Do you know where darkness goes? When God lights this morning sun, and the darkness that has covered the earth is now dispelled. Do you know where it goes?” Do YOU know? When you walk into a room and you flip the light switch; you've walked into a low room dark...and you turn on the light and the darkness suddenly disappears...where does it go? Where? And God asks Job

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<sup>2</sup> Job 38:1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Job 38:4-22.

questions like that, and you can see something happening while God talks to Job. And it's a mighty good thing when it happens to any of us.

Remember that God had caused Job to lose a lot of things, but there was one thing that Job still retained. He had lost his possessions. He had lost his property. He had lost his health. But Job was still there. And you can see something. Job as tall as ever, in spite of his sufferings. Job as big as ever. But when God talks to Job, every question that he asks you can see Job shrinking in size. You can see God increasing, and Job decreasing. And every question that comes increases the size of God - if you can use a term like that - and decreases the size of Job. What a good thing it is when anything happens that will cause God to increase and cause us to decrease. That's the first thing we notice - Job becoming smaller and smaller and smaller, as God becomes greater and greater and greater. There's a reason for that! We shall see the reason for it...in just a little while.

Now, the next thing that we rediscover is this - that God is not giving the answer to the question of why Job was suffering. He's not giving the answer to the question of Job of why the righteous suffer. But God is doing something infinitely better than that - watch it! God is not giving an answer, he is giving himself. Now, watch the process. Remember, if you please, that God can not give to us all he wants to give of himself until we reach the end of ourselves. God was speaking in Job, an empty vessel, in order that in that empty vessel, God might pour himself. The most precious thing that God gives to us, is not the things that we speak of as his blessings and his provisions. The most precious thing God gives to us is himself. And into the empty vessel of this man's life, God was speaking to pour himself, and he couldn't do it until Job was completely empty to Job.

Now we'd better underscore that, my dear. We'd better underscore it in red ink. God is most anxious to fill you with himself. But he isn't going to share your life, the vessel of your life, with things that you insist upon gathering into it - things that clutter it up, things that maybe defile it, for anything that takes the place of God defiles no matter what it is. God is speaking. Empty vessels, that he might fill them. The only kind of vessel God ever fills is an empty vessel. Job had to learn that. And if we haven't learned it, it's time we did. God fills empty vessels, that's all. That's the only kind. And the moment that God can find an empty vessel and fill it with himself, that's the moment when miracles happen. There was a moment in Job's life where miracles happened. Happened to him, happened to his possessions, happened all the way around it - miracles happened, because God has got hold of the empty vessel of a man's life. He had to use all of these means - the means of suffering and all the rest of it, in order to empty this man of himself and get rid of Job, so that into this empty vessel God could pour himself. O my dear, if we could only get a hold of it! What a transformation it would, it would...be wrought in most of our lives. Miracles happen when God's great fullness meets our emptiness. Did you hear that? Miracles happen when God's fullness meets our emptiness. Miracles will happen when God's strength meets our weakness. Miracles happen. Oh, that they may happen in the life of some of us in this very room tonight.

Now, let's look at the next thing, and here's another strange thing: Job was never meant to know. It was never God's intention that Job should know the meaning of the suffering that had come upon him. God had no intention of spelling this thing out, step by step and word by word and incident by incident - God had no intention of telling Job step by step why this thing happened. Now let's look and see the reason for that. The real test of Job's faith was not some trial accompanied by explanation, but the real test of faith comes when trial is born without explanation. Now, when explanation is given, then faith becomes

mixed with sight, and God is interested in faith without sight! If the explanation had been given, then faith would have been changed to sight. But what God wanted, and what God finally got was a man who would trust him without knowing why...without the explanation. And God had no intention of giving Job that which would have turned faith into sight...or at any rate, would have diluted faith.

The glory of our relationship with God is that we can not only follow him even through the dark valleys sometimes of suffering, when he gives us step by step the reason why. But the glory of our relationship with God, my dear, is that we can follow him even through the valley of suffering without knowing why. Without the answers. That's faith with a capital "F." That's faith that brings the glow of approval upon the face of our heavenly Father. When he can look down and see a child of his who will follow his leading however dark it may be, and follow it without explanation. That's the kind of person that God's looking for. God can work miracles with a person like that.

Now, here is another thing that Job discovered. He discovered this - that God was right close to him all the time. Now remember, one of the things that Job was battling against all through this episode was the thought that God was a long way away. That God had forgotten. Every once in awhile something comes out of his heart, something we wish that hadn't come out of his heart that shows that deep down there, he thought God had forgotten. That God had withdrawn himself. That God was a long way away. That God had ceased to care, and that he had left Job in the midst of this unexplainable mystery of his suffering without the comfort of his presence. And then suddenly, Job discovered God right near. He is talking to him. Near enough to talk to God, to Job personally. Near enough to bring a personal message to him. Keep in mind, God could have spoken to Job through an angel, but he didn't. He spoke to him personally. Job could have received a message from God from some angelic being, but he didn't. God talked to Job personally. And Job made the grand discovery, that the darker the valley, the nearer God is. And it's a wonderful moment in any life, when we discover that God is near us when we need him most. Job found that out. God, right close, not a long way away. Not way off there in the distance. Not too busy running the universe to be bothered about this. But God is near. Close. Caring. God, near. All the time, he was near, even in the darkest of shadows when Job couldn't see him and couldn't hear him; he questioned his presence. God was near all the time. The darker the valley, the nearer that God is. Job made that grand discovery, and he made it because he heard the voice of God speaking personally, intimately, closely into his own ear.

Let's look again. Job discovered that there was one final place of rest. It is not in possessions. It is not in righteousness. It is not in the approval of things around about. The final resting place for us all is in God himself. Now, we live in a restless age. The thing that marks the day in which we live is multiplied restlessness, and let us not be diluted into thinking that that applies only to the world around us; it applies to the church, as well. Within the church, there are multitudes of restless folks. And the reason, my dear is just this - they have not learned to rest in God. Job had to get to the end of himself. As long as one fragment of his possessions remained. As long as there was one ray of light. As long as there was one bit of pride left in Job, there would be no rest in God. But we are restless until we find our rest in him. Oh, that we might know about it. Oh, that we might know that we can fling ourselves, and all our needs, and all of our problems, and all of our difficulties, full-length upon God. That's what rest means. You can throw yourself full-length on God. What a pity we do not know. What a pity we have to go through these periods of restlessness...of inward disturbance, because we do not rest in God. Job had to learn that, not in possessions, not in riches, not in his so-called righteousness, not in his

reputation, but in God. In GOD is our refuge and strength. In GOD we rest. Oh rest in the Lord...and wait patiently for him. Job had to learn that. Resting. Rest in God.

Now, let's look at one or two other things. Here is a very important thing, and I want you to think carefully with me for these next few minutes. One of the seldom mentioned attributes of God is God's capacity for suffering. Now we usually think of God in every other way but that. God's creative capacity. God's providing capacity. But one of the things we seldom mention and seldom even think about is God's capacity for suffering. Now it's wonderful when God invites us into the fellowship of his provision. When God invites us into the provision, the fellowship of those who find their needs supplied out of the great heart of God. But God is wanting to invite folks, He wanted to invite Job...into a holy of holies, far deeper in the person of God than any of these things. You can see God's provision in his hands. You can see God's guidance in his eyes. But you've got to get deep down in the heart of God to find that, that inner thing - God's capacity to suffer.

What was God really showing us upon the cross? What? He was showing us his capacity to suffer. And a man long ago was being trained by strange means in which in some way even Satan himself was mixed up. God was training a man that he might invite him into the holy of holies of those who have learned the meaning of this phrase - "the fellowship of his suffering."

There was a man years ago who shut everything on one side for that. He said, "I was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."<sup>4</sup> And he counted them all but loss that he might win Christ, and the central thing that he mentioned in this phrase and thought of winning Christ was that he might enter into the fellowship of his suffering. God had found a man...had trained a man that he was inviting into this intimate brotherhood of those who have learned to suffer without explanations.

Now, my dear, do you know anything about that? All coming from a brotherhood near to the heart of God. It is the brotherhood of those who have learned to suffer without explanation. If you ever join them, you will find Job there ahead of you. Yes, you will. You will find him there ahead of you. God honors us. There is no greater honor that he can bestow upon us than to trust us with suffering. God trusts us with suffering, and we trust him with the explanation. And that's the way he wants it. That's where we've been in Job. That's where he's bringing him. Now when he gets Job to that place, then you can see he can not only trust Job with suffering, he can trust Job with other things then. When God finds a man that he can trust with suffering, he can trust him with other things as well. God can now trust Job with twice as much as he had before. For every unit of loss, there is twice as much now because God could trust him with it. That's the reason. And the thing that God did for Job was to bring him into that inner circle of those who know how to trust without explanation and God can trust us with the other things then.

Now, one other thing, if you please, and I want you to notice this. I want you to notice this. We've got to go right to the end of the book for this. We've got to go right to the end of it, and you will find this is the final mark of how great was this work that God had been doing in the life of Job...through the ministry of unexplained suffering. Now there was one final thing that Job did. And it is this. [Chapter] forty-two, verse ten. And I want you to notice it. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job," now

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<sup>4</sup> Philippians 3:5-6.

here's the turning point. He's been bringing it right up to this point; there is one point of climax. Now notice it. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." Now if you want to know how great a thing had been accomplished in the life of Job, you look at that. Here are those who had surrounded him with the multitude of their words; with the scorpion sting of some of their counsel, he had replied in kind to them. But you won't find anywhere, up to this point, where Job had ever prayed for them. But now he prays for them. And if you want to know how near Job was being lifted to the heart of God, you can find it right there. And Job prayed...for his friends.

Now, my dear, we've been following a very interesting pathway. I'm sure it's been interesting. I think perhaps God has had something to say to us. I do not intend for one moment to assume the role of the one who applies this. I'm not going to do that. There is someone not far from us, who is much more able to apply any of this to your life and mine than I am. How would it be if we just let Him do that? Has God been able to say something to you personally through this? Has he? Have you been able to discover a little bit what God wanted to do not only with Job, but with you? And will you let Him do it? Will you let Him bring you into this holy of holies, this intimate fellowship of those who have learned to suffer without explanation? Hmm? Will you? I hope you will. I hope you will.

*Our Father, we pray that Thou will take this meditation and use it some way for Thy glory. Thou hast not been far from us. We have been conscious of Thy gracious presence all the way along. Thou hast had something to say intimately to our hearts. May we go away with the high honor that Thou hast bestowed upon us, the thought of our great privilege - God has spoken to me. And may there be something here out of this group, with this thought in our hearts that will find its expression in the life of this dear church. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*