

THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

Message: The Importance of Unimportant People

Editorial Note: This message was delivered by Sidney Cox to undoubtedly a small church congregation. I do not know the exact date or the congregation to whom the message was delivered; however, from some references in this sermon, it was sometime during his retirement years which spanned from 1962 – 1975.

My further guess would be that it was delivered sometime between 1962 – 1972 when Sidney and Violet Cox lived in retirement in Detroit, Michigan. Violet died in 1967, and in 1972, Sidney moved to Birmingham, Alabama to be near my parents, John and Jean Cox.

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

I want you to turn in your Bible for a few minutes to the 9th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles – the 9th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

I've been quite interested of late and I've found myself on a pathway that's just fascinating following this thought, and you find it all the way through the Bible: the importance of unimportant people. The importance of unimportant people.

Now, you meet them everywhere. I live among a lot of folks like that and they say in their hearts, if they don't say it with their lips, "I'm not any good anymore. I don't see any way in which the Lord can ever use me." And they say it, and they mean it, for some strange reason.

But you know, this Bible of ours is just filled with folks like that – just common, ordinary people and they suddenly appear; and for a moment the search light of heaven is focused on them; and in the blessed plan of God, there is something that they do. It may not be an important thing. It may be so unimportant apparently that we don't even know their name; and yet, without it the picture would be incomplete. And you find them everywhere – folks that suddenly appear, do something and then just as suddenly disappear. And they're there once.

Now my dear, let me give you some homework right away. When you're checking through your Bible again, you be on the lookout for folks who are only mentioned once – just once. Now sometimes you will find them named; more often, you will find them not named at all. But you will find lots of them, just almost an endless string of them – folks that appear just once, do something and then disappear; and you don't see them either before or again. And there they are, and they're just ordinary folks.

They're not mountain-peak men. When we're talking tonight, we're not talking about Peter, James and John and Paul and all the rest of them. They may appear incidentally, but we're not talking about them. For once, Paul and all the rest of them are going to be incidental to somebody else. And we're going to look at folks, just two at any rate who suddenly appear, do something unusual, or give something that they alone could give and then just as suddenly they disappear. And we're reminded that very often, unimportant people become very important, because when God puts His hand out and touches

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somebody, that somebody immediately becomes important. And when that somebody does what God wants them to do, that simply adds to the importance of it. And you find them over and over again.

Let me mention one or two of them. I'm not going to talk about them, just going to mention them. In the 3rd Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you will find a man lame from his birth, and one of the interesting things about it is that somebody for years carried that man, lame from his birth, and took him to the beautiful gate of the temple and all it says about them is, "They laid him daily by the beautiful gate of the temple."

Now my dear, what do you mean by 'they'? Now we don't know, but God does and on that little group of folks, by the use of the common place word 'they' that distinguishes them, there they are – 'they'. That's all they could do. That's all they did do. And yet, 'they' my dear, suddenly become immortal.

Now it's amazing how much you find all the way through of folks just like that – people who did some little thing and then disappeared. The importance of unimportant people.

Now you are important folks, so that this message is for you to tell somebody who isn't important – you be sure you do that. Will you? And remind them, God uses unimportant people to do very important things sometimes.

Let me read you a story about it. This is the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and he had been stricken on the road to Damascus and sight had gone from his eyes, and now here he is. And this is what he said, [Acts Chapter 9] 6th verse, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man." The blindness was still there. "But they led him," – by the way, who do you mean by 'they'? Who were these folks who led him by the hand? Um? "But they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was there three days without sight, neither did eat nor drink."¹

Now, here are two unimportant people who do important things. You notice their names. "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight," and Straight is simply the name for 'Main Street' – that's all. It's just a common name that was applied to the 'Main Street' of any city. So that what he's told to do is to go to a certain place on 'Main Street' Damascus. Now let's go on, "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name unto the Gentiles."²

¹ Acts 9:6-9.

² Acts 9: 10-15.

Now that's the first time that Paul, Saul of Tarsus is spoken of as a 'chosen vessel' and this was the man, this man Ananias was the man who first spoke as a Christian to the Apostle Paul, that beautiful word, 'brother.' He said to him, "Brother, Saul."

Now did you notice two names there; both of them are handicapped by the name they bear. How would you like to be named 'Judas?' How would you like to be named, 'Ananias?' If somebody came and said, "I'm going to have a baby after a while and if the baby is a boy, I'm going to name him 'Ananias,' or I'm going to name him 'Judas' – what would you think of that? Here are two men, handicapped by the very name they bear. Ananias – this man to whom the Lord spoke in a vision; and when he did, you remember, Ananias knew immediately who it was that was talking; and in spite of the fact that he expressed to an understanding heavenly father some of the doubts that was in his heart; when Ananias was told to go, Ananias went.

Now maybe we're beginning to get some idea of why the Lord could use this unimportant man. We don't see him again. There are three 'Ananiases' – if that's the way to say it in the plural – but there are three of them. Two of them are nasty folks. One you will find in the 5th Chapter there, and the other you will find later on from this, a nasty old high priest by that name. But in the center, with this darkness here and darkness there, in the center, a man named Ananias. And when God spoke to Ananias, Ananias knew who it was that was talking – he was on speaking terms with God.

And I'm wondering my dear if that isn't one of the first requirements from our heavenly father, if he's to use anybody. He's going to choose somebody who's on speaking terms with Him. Ananias was on speaking terms with God – he recognized God's voice. And when he was told to do something, he did it. Now it wasn't an important job, was it? He simply had to go to this house that was on 'Main Street' Damascus and find the place there, and give a message from the Lord to a man who was praying. Now if you want to know what Paul was doing during those three days in the house of Judas, that's what he was doing. We know what he wasn't doing, he wasn't eating or drinking. But he had discovered in three days of communion with God that there is something more important than eating and drinking.

Communion with God is something, and in three days of communion with God, in a little house where he didn't know where he was probably – couldn't see it at all; and yet, here in this house, a man was in communion with God.

Now it's to him that this man Ananias goes with God's message. An unimportant man – you won't find him anywhere else. He suddenly appears, listens to God, does what God wants him to do, carries his message; and having done that, he disappears. And you won't find him again.

By the way, the other man is equally interesting if you care to take the cover off and take a good look at him. Judas, this Judas is a very interesting man. In the first place, he had one possession as far as we know – he possessed a house and it was located on 'Main Street' Damascus. Now that isn't anything extraordinary because there were undoubtedly a lot of other people who owned houses on 'Main Street' Damascus. But this is what made this house and this man unusual – it was God's house as well as Judas'. It was not just his house. God had first claim on it! Oh yes, it was in his name – that's true. But it was God's house too.

One day an extraordinary thing happened. There was a knock on the door and there outside, there were a little group of men – three or four, probably – and one of them obviously in distress in the center. Judas hadn't seen or heard of any one of them – didn't know anything about them, and yet here they were. And the wonderful thing about it is that this house that was in his name, but really belonged to God was opened up without question to God's need for the moment and the need of one of God's servants. And in that moment, the house that belonged to Judas shined brightly as the house that belongs to God.

Now my dear, there's one thing you find out about Judas. You find out something about Ananias – this unimportant man who knew God's voice; and when God said, "Do this," Ananias did it.

Now, here's a man who owned a house and it was God's house; and into this house came a man at the most critical point of his entire life – a man blind for the moment; and this house, with the name of Judas on it, but which really belonged to God was there when God needed it.

Now my dear, we're looking at just two folks – unimportant people who did a very important thing. That is, it became important because they did it in the will of God; and let us remind each other that there isn't anything that is done in the will of God that is ever small. It's never unimportant. The man who does it may appear to be unimportant; the thing itself may be unimportant; but if it's something that is in the will of God, immediately, that thing becomes of tremendous importance and God puts immortality upon the thing itself and the person who does it.

Now, the only people upon whom immortality rests are those who are in the will of God and doing the will of God. Now we've got two men here, they appear and then disappear. They did a simple thing – it wasn't much, was it? – to open the door of your house and take care of a person for three days who didn't eat anything. It was so simple, wasn't it? It was so simple. But, what would have happened if Judas had been too busy to bother, or if Judas had said, "This is my house and I'm going to keep it," and the door had not been opened. Well I don't know what would have happened, but I know what would have happened to Judas. He would have disappeared into the eternal darkness and then never been heard of again. Never.

But here is a man, unimportant who suddenly became immortal because he was in the will of God and that which he did was in the will of God.

Now, one of the things we meet constantly as I was saying a moment or two ago are folks who think they are unimportant because they can't do some great thing, particularly folks who are getting old. I live among them all the time. "There isn't anything I can do. There isn't anything I can do." But there is, we can live in the will of God, and when we do, we shall find that the will of God can be done through us.

The importance of unimportant people.

A widow – what was her name? She put something into the collection box one day. You don't read of her before or afterwards. And yet, suddenly she appears – a little, simple thing. And here was a woman who suddenly appears, clothed with immortality.

An unnamed boy who gave five barley loaves and two fishes. We don't know his name. We don't know anything about him except that, but that's enough isn't it?

And you know, one of the most interesting things that you can find when you're not theological – when you're just an ordinary, common Christian like most of us are; and you're not attempting to be theological; you're not bothering too much about doctrinal definitions; but when you're enjoying the flowers along the road, the pathway of the scripture, it's amazing what you find. And I've been so enjoying it that I've tried to mention it to two or three folks here and there; and I'm mentioning it to you tonight in the hope that you in turn will tell somebody else who thinks they are unimportant, what God can do with unimportant people.

Now I don't know what you expected from me tonight, but whatever you expected, that's it. And that's it, and we'll just leave the thought, shall we? – not only in our hearts, but let's pass it on to somebody else; somebody who is unimportant. And it's wonderful what happens when an unimportant person does something in the will of God, and something, somehow an unearthly glow gathers around them and they become immortal.

Now my dear, that's it for tonight. I'm not even going to ask you to sing...

(Audio ends)