

**Sidney Cox – Personal Testimony
May 3, 1975. Shades Mountain Baptist Church.
Birmingham, Alabama**



Editorial Note: Sidney Cox delivered what would prove to be his final testimony and message in song in May, 1975 at the age of 87. And he was perhaps never more moving. The music program of my family’s home church, Shades Mountain Baptist Church was putting on the great Bill Gaither praise production, “Alleluia.” Dr. Charles Carter, the then pastor had developed a close relationship and dear admiration for Sidney Cox as he got to know him during his final years in Birmingham. As part of this program, Carter asked Sidney to give his testimony, which was followed by his singing the Gaither song, “The Longer I Serve Him, The Sweeter He Grows,” with instruments and backed by their 100-voice choir. At the appointed time in the program, Sidney took to the stage with the assistance of my father. He was a little unsteady on his feet, but his mind and voice was still strong. And he still had that magic of touching people’s hearts.

There was a very large congregation of 1,600 on hand for this production that night, and as he concluded they were truly moved, and burst into applause, a bit unusual for church in that era. As I watched, I sensed that I was watching the end of a remarkable era, the era in which Sidney Cox could share his testimony and message with others. He had touched tens of thousands in his life, maybe more. He had relationships with people throughout the entire world who revered him, whose lives

he had influenced and to whom he had shared the Gospel. As he left the stage, I was very saddened because of this. This proved to be correct. Sidney Cox died later in September of that year.

Following is his testimony from that night.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. January 2009.

I'd like to talk with you about a subject that is not too popular. And when you mention it, you're liable to get a reaction. The subject is growing older.

Now did you here somebody say, "Why bring that up?" And I'm quite sure that there are two or three or even more folks who took a good look at me and said, "You ought to know something about that." And you're so right, my dear. I do.

I've had a long time to find out about this business of growing older. I've been mixed up with it for 87 years. And you know you learn a few things in a time like that. That's a long time.

But, you're involved with this growing older business too. The very first thing you did after you arrived in this veil of tears? ... you started to get older.

An hour from now you'll leave this building and when you do, you'll be two hours older than you were when you came into it. And that's so whether you like it or not.

Of course, you don't have to leave exactly the same as you came into it. If you came into it some old stick in the mud, you don't have to leave that way. Not at all. You can leave with a song in your heart. You see.

Now, I've noticed this. That folks who know what to do with old age, and you meet them occasionally. You meet a lot of folks who don't know what to do about it at all. They haven't the faintest notion how to handle old age, and consequently, old age handles them. And you can find them everywhere you go. Go to Florida in the season and you'll find them there by the thousands. Old folks, who haven't the slightest idea what to do about old age.

But you find some occasionally who do. Old age for them is a privilege, and not a problem.

Now, if you look at them you'll find that there is a secret there. And the secret dear, is just this - they know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. And when you know Him, then old age becomes beautiful. It isn't a problem anymore. It's a privilege. It isn't a burden. It's a blessing. But you know this matter of knowing Jesus, that's something that doesn't just happen. It has a beginning somewhere. And this is my testimony.

I don't know how and when it began with you. I do know when it began with me. It began 67 years ago. And the pattern of it was commonplace enough: a revival meeting, a preacher with a message, an invitation, a response. You recognize it? You went through the same thing. But the wonderful thing about it as far as I'm concerned is - I remember that invitation. It happened 67 years ago, but I can hear the man's voice tonight, and he said this. "If you'll take Christ as your Saviour and Lord, stand up and say, "I will!" And I stood up and said "I Will!" And you know, in a moment of time a miracle happened. And it always does.

You see, what happened - my "I Will" and His "I Will" were moving in different directions. Now they had come together. And that's the miracle moment in anybody's life. And if it hasn't happened in your life, it's time it did.

67 years? And all the time, God's keeping grace has been as real as his saving grace.

Now it's wonderful to be a young Christian - 20, 40. It's wonderful to be a Christian at 60. But that's the jumping off place isn't it? Is there anything beyond 60? You stand and look at the sunset. Is there anything beyond that? Well, it all depends on whether you know Jesus. If you stand at 60, and you know him, then it's wonderful. But, 60 without Jesus? We don't like to think about it, do we?

It's been wonderful for me. This is my testimony, and you're the kind of folks to whom I can say this: that the Lord has given to this old man the best 20 years of his life - from 65 to 85, I've done more work and better work. And I'd just like to tell you that.

No wonder we like Bill Gaither's song that says, "The Longer I Serve Him, The Sweeter He Grows."

Since I started for the Kingdom,
 Since my life He controls,
 Since I gave my heart to Jesus,
 The longer I serve Him,
 The sweeter He grows.

The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows,
 The more that I love Him, more love He bestows;
 Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,
 The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.