

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

CD# 109 contains two sermons
II Peter 2:17 – Wells Without Water (Tracks 1-7)
John 4 – The Woman at the Well (Tracks 8-13)

The Woman at the Well
Gospel of John - Chapter 4

Editorial Note: I do not know the exact time or place at which Sidney Cox delivered this message. My best guess would be that he delivered it to the Grace Bible Church in Detroit, Michigan, a church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”) that frequently invited him to preach and teach.

Sidney and Violet Cox resided in retirement at The Eventide residence in Detroit, Michigan from 1962 through 1972. Sidney Cox would have been 75 years of age in 1962.

During this period of his life, Sidney was in great demand as a preacher and Bible teacher both within The Salvation Army and churches of the CMA. While his career with the Salvation Army is well-known and chronicled, his late in life relationship with CMA was less well-known. This relationship was so close however, that CMA virtually claimed him for their own. Grace Bible Church was a CMA church.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. July 30, 2010.

The 4th chapter of the Gospel of John. Now, the moment that you enter into this 4th chapter of the Gospel of John, you begin to feel, I'm quite sure, I felt it and you are feeling it now, a sense of almost holy excitement about it. Because the moment that you push open the door of the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John, you find yourself facing one of the most remarkable characters in that book that we speak of as the Gospel of John. It's filled with remarkable characters from beginning to end. But it's questionable if any of them grip our hearts as does this verbal picture of the Woman of Samaria. And we push open the door of the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John and walk through the portals and here she is, standing right before our eyes.

Now, this chapter in the Gospel of John cannot be studied apart from the gospel itself. Now, it's quite true that most of the chapters in the Gospel of John will present some specific picture, some definite lesson that's there. But we need to remember always that these things have to be gathered together in order to form the total message of the Gospel of John. Now, we need to look at this and see what it says individually, personally, in that 4th chapter and then how it fits in with the entire message of the Gospel of John - how it fits into the pattern of it.

Now, the moment that you look at this Woman of Samaria, you begin to say this about her. Well now, she is one of the characters that appear only in the Gospel of John. Now, you will find them from one end of the book to the other, people that you have not met before. Don't look for the Woman of

Samaria anywhere else. She is one of the distinctive characters of the Gospel of John. You've got them from one end to the other. Nicodemus is one. The Woman of Samaria is one. The impotent man by the Pool of Bethesda is one. And you can go on, one after the other - the man born blind and Lazarus and Malchus, and just one after the other. And you won't find these people anywhere else. Now, that's the first thing you observe about her. She's one of the distinctive characters of the Gospel of John.

Now, again it gives us again another instance of something that is characteristic in this book and that is that every chapter begins with some dark picture of human need. And then through the curtain of darkness our Lord steps to meet the need. And you can find it in the beginning of every chapter in the book. And it's just one after the other. Now, you've got it here. Here is a woman in the deep darkness of her sinful need, and our Lord steps through the curtain and meets the need as only He can do. Now, that's another thing that we notice about her.

Then you notice again that it is another instance of the particular method that our Lord employed as recorded in the Gospel of John of the private conversation rather than the public address. Now, we have said to each other before that in the Gospel of John the great teaching messages of our Lord are given to individuals, private conversations, rather than public addresses. Now, you'll find the public addresses, of course. But the great teachings of the Gospel of John as far as our Lord is concerned were given to individuals - an audience of one. Nicodemus for instance. The Woman of Samaria. And you can go on and on and on and on.

The greatest things He ever said, He said to an audience of one. And, the particular thing that He said to this woman of Samaria, probably the greatest thing that the Lord Jesus ever said about God the Father, He said to that woman. An audience of one, and not much of a one at that. And yet He said the greatest thing He ever said about God the Father to that woman, when He said, "God is a Spirit. And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."¹ There isn't anything greater than that, that ever fell from His lips. And this was the woman. An audience of one. That's all.

Now, the moment that you get in there you see some strange words. For instance, there's the word, Samaria. Now, He doesn't stay very long. He goes through Samaria every once in a while, but here He's stopping in Samaria. He's got a mission in Samaria. "He must needs go through Samaria."² And Samaria itself is an interesting word there.

The word, Sychar is the name of the little town where the well was located, that's an interesting place - named after Abraham's grandson. And we've got this word too.

There's a time that is only mentioned twice in the Gospel of John - the sixth hour. Now, the sixth hour is high noon, as we all know. But it's only mentioned twice. You'll find other hours mentioned, the third hour and the ninth hour, and so on. But the sixth hour is only mentioned twice in the Gospel of John. You'll find it in a number of other places, of course. It's mentioned here in connection with this woman of Samaria, and then it's one of the points of time in connection with the crucifixion of our Lord. The sixth hour - high noon. Here's something that's happening at high noon, which is an unusual time for anything to happen. That was siesta time and still is, I guess. And so you've got this.

1 John 4:24

2 John 4:4

And then you've got this woman. Here's a woman who stands at the portal, the entrance of a chapter. You'll only find that twice in the Gospel of John. And the strange thing about it is, that in both cases, the woman who stands at the beginning of the chapter is not much of a woman. This woman of Samaria wasn't. The woman who stands at the beginning of the 8th chapter of John is not much of a woman. But here we have them. And it's one of the extraordinary things that you find here.

One of the things that we're interested in in this chapter, of course, is to see our Lord's teaching methods. But the chapter itself is an illustration of the value of certain teaching methods. For instance, the contrast method, where you set one thing in contrast to another. It's one of the most valuable techniques in connection with teaching that you can find anywhere. Constantly being used, where you set one thing in contrast to another. And in the light of this, you learn things about this. The contrast method of teaching.

Have you ever noticed how many contrasts there are in the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John? A Jewish man and a Samaritan woman. Contrasts – take a good look at them. Look at them. Take a good look at them. Did you ever notice that two people asked the same question? Give me to drink. He asked it, so does she. But what a difference, isn't there? What a difference. Have you ever noticed two kinds of water in that chapter? Well water and living water. Put them side by side, and here you've got the value of it again. Notice the two kinds of wells that are there. A well without, and a well within. And you've got the contrast again.

Did you notice the two mountains that are mentioned? Mount Zion is one, and Mount Ebal is the other, where this Samaritan mongrel religion was centered - for the Samaritans were a mongrel race in everything, even in their religion. They were a sad mixture of Jews and pagans in themselves, which is one of the reasons why the Jew would have no dealings with a Samaritan. And even in their religion, it was a mixture of paganism and Judaism, and they had their own centers and there it was.

Have you noticed the difference in the converts, the people that are gathering around the Lord, as you see them here? Up til now, you've seen folks who amounted to something – John and Philip and Andrew and Simon and Nathanael and Nicodemus, for that matter. And now suddenly, you come and you look at this one. And the strange thing about it, or is it strange, that our Lord is just as much interested in this woman of Samaria as he was in Nicodemus. And He gave her just as much as He gave to Nicodemus. And you've got it there, the contrasting conversations between learned Nicodemus on the one side and the ignorance of the Woman of Samaria on the other. And so you've got this, this thought of the contrasts. Jesus and this woman.

But the greatest of all the contrasts is the Savior and the sinner. And there you've got them, standing or sitting side by side at the well at Sychar. The Savior and the sinner. Lovely to look at Him, because we've got a beautiful picture of Him here - the picture of Him in the loveliness of His humanity. He wanted her to see His humanity and He wants us to see it too.

He was weary. We talk about being weary. We don't know anything about being weary. He did. He was hungry. We talk about being hungry sometimes. We don't know anything about being hungry. He did. He was thirsty. He'd been walking a long time, through the upper ends of Judea and into Samaria.

And here at high noon He was thirsty. We don't know anything about thirst. But He did.

Have you ever noticed, my dear, how remarkable this thing is, His request for water from that well? Have you ever thought how remarkable that is? Here was the Creator of the water in the well asking for a drink of something that He, in the first place, had created, "For without Him was not anything made that was made."³ He could have exercised His divine right and commanded that water to rise out of the depths of the well in a crystal stream, and He could have quenched His thirst there in an appropriate manner.

He almost did that in the second chapter, didn't He? He turned water into wine in the second chapter. Why didn't He do a miracle with this? There was a reason why He did it in the second chapter. Why didn't He do it here? Why didn't He work a miracle here and command that water to come and serve Him? It was His. Why didn't He do that? Because if He had, it would have placed a barrier between Him and the woman He was trying to reach that could never have been bridged. If He had done that, and that woman had watched something miraculous happening in that well, she would have been hot-footing it off there for Sychar and you wouldn't have seen or heard anything more of her. And so He deliberately put on one side His supernatural powers. You find the loveliness of the human Jesus in this picture as you will not find scarcely anywhere else.

Strange thing, isn't it? The hour at which this woman came to the well. The surprise that she registered when a man, a Jewish man, asked of her, water. She expressed that surprise. The dimness of her understanding. But the thing that we're most interested in is to watch the teaching method of our Lord. How He reached that woman with His message, and what He did that was necessary before the message could be completed. Now, you watch Him and we'll just go over it again.

Before anyone can teach anything to anybody, and that's the business of a teacher; a teacher wants to teach something to somebody. But you can't do that at all until you have first established a point of contact with that person. You must establish a point of connection with that person before you can begin to teach. Now, the way in which our Lord established the point of connection, the contact with that woman, did you notice how He did it? Because this is a method that you can find in Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching*, and a lot of other places.⁴ But He seemed to know about it two thousand years before.

The best way to make a contact with anybody is not to do something for them, it's to ask them to do something for you. If you can get somebody to do something for you, you've established the point of contact. In these days, we are sick and tired, I'm talking about people in general, we are sick and tired of folks doing things for us, until it has got to the place now where it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. And we're all looking for somebody to do something for us. But when we once do something for somebody else, a point of contact has been established and that's exactly what He did. You give me a drink. Wasn't she astonished? Wasn't it a wonder for her? But it established that point of contact.

Now, the next thing, having established the point of contact, is to arouse interest in the thing that you

³ John 1:3

⁴ For over 100 years, students in the field of education have studied John Milton Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching*. Published in 1884, this tome is one of the most enduring descriptions on the art of teaching.

want to impart to them. You can't impart anything until interest has been aroused. Interest, my dear, is like the hands of the mind reaching out for something that you are offering. Now, the hands of the mind never reach out after anything until interest has first been established. Now, the way that our Lord did that, of course, is by what we speak of sometimes as, the closed hand method. Now, you've done that with small children, of course, with your own children probably.

A good many times you've closed your hand in the group of little children and you say, "I've got something in my hand. Wouldn't you like to see it? I've got something in my hand I think you'd like. Wouldn't you like to see it? Wouldn't you like to see what I've got in my hand?" And before you've gone very far, you've got a bunch of starry-eyed youngsters around you, and probably somebody trying to pry your fingers open. And you've established interest, and added to it the necessary ingredient of curiosity.

Now, He'd established his point of contact; He had aroused interest; He had also established curiosity. Now, what's He going to show her? Something that she doesn't understand? Or, is He going to show her and start with something that she does understand? Now, the basic principle of teaching is from the known to the unknown. Now, supposing He had opened His hand and revealed that what He wanted to talk to her about was something that was so far beyond her understanding that she could never understand it. He wouldn't have got to first base with it at all. But our Lord talked with her about something she understood, and then led her out from that to something she didn't understand - from water with which she had been familiar all her life, to water that she didn't know anything about; from a well with which she was familiar on the outside, to a well springing up into everlasting life on the inside.

Have you ever noticed that the basic requirement of both Nicodemus and the Woman of Samaria was exactly the same? They needed life. "Ye must be born again."⁵ That's the beginning of life. "You must have a well of water springing up into everlasting life."⁶ The need was exactly the same. And our Lord, wonderful teacher, marvelous teacher, knew all about it and he started with something with which she was quite familiar, and then led her out until something arrived in her comprehension with which she had not been familiar at all.

Now, something very strange happens right there. He's talking to her about a gift that He's going to - "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that's talking to you, if you only knew"⁷ - He's going to give her a gift. But you know something had to be dealt with before the gift could be accepted, before He could give the gift, a gift as beautiful as this. You don't put clean water into a dirty vessel. Right? Is that right? He was not going to put clean water into a dirty vessel. And so right in the middle of it He stops, and deals with the dirt in the vessel. "You go and get your husband."⁸ And the whole mess of her life is brought out into the open. When you can bring it out into the open, you can deal with it. You can't deal with it any other way. Inward difficulties are never dealt with in any other way, except to bring them out in the open. And then when that happens, then in the light of His cleansing power, He can give something.

5 John 3:7

6 John 4:14

7 John 4:10

8 John 4:16

There was an understanding that came, a cleansing understanding. Do you remember what she said when she got to her little village and told what had happened there, with this man that told me all that ever I did? This one. And she said, "Is not this the Christ? Is not this the Messiah, the Christ?"⁹ Something had happened. And now, into the vessel of that life there can now come unlimited instruction.

One of the most beautiful things about this story of the 4th chapter of John is the fact, and we so seldom mention it, is that our Lord spent two days in that little village of Sychar. She went back and spread it abroad and folks believed because of her word, sure they did. And then our Lord and his disciples spent two days in Sychar, and more believed. Have you ever stopped to wonder what He talked about during those two days, because there isn't anything in the scripture that will indicate it? What do you think He talked about? What? What do you think He was interested in? Do you think they wanted to show Him around some of the fancy things that might be in Sychar? Take Him here and show Him that and do this and do that. What do you think happened in those two days? What do you think He talked about? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we know?

I hoping, you know, that God has got tape recorders in heaven that'll bring back to us some of the things we long to know about. Wouldn't it be wonderful to listen to the conversations that went on in Sychar while He was there? I wonder what He talked about? Hmm? I wonder. But He talked about something because a lot of folks believed. They sure did.

And then, the 8th chapter of Acts there was a revival quite a long time afterwards in that very spot. And Philip, the evangelist conducted a revival meeting right there in that very place, in that area. And folks just flocked to believe. The ground had all been prepared. Don't you see? Oh, the wonder of it all.

And you know, one of the loveliest things about it is that the 4th chapter of John does not end with the Woman of Samaria. It ends with a beautiful picture of a nobleman's son healed by the wonder and marvel of the power of our Lord. This time He released his supernatural power. But in the presence of that water, He didn't. And so you've got a chapter that has a spiritual miracle at one end, and a physical miracle at the other. And right in the center of it, the marvel of the one who can do the spiritual miracle and the physical miracle, and it's all wrapped up in Him. And He stands in the center of it, and reaches out one of His lovely hands for a spiritual miracle with the Woman of Samaria, and with a physical miracle for the boy or the child of the nobleman at the end of the chapter. And He stands in the center of it, majestic, marvelous, wonderful.

The 4th chapter of the Gospel of John. I don't wonder that sometimes we feel a bit of holy excitement when we dare to push open the door of a chapter like that. But we have done it tonight. And we have been looking, not merely at the Woman of Samaria, but we've been looking at Him too.

Prayer:

Our Father, let Thy blessing be upon Thy Word. Thou hast promised to take care of it. It costs so much to produce it. We pray our Father, that this word shall not only be of blessing to those of us who have been listening to this in this room, but perhaps others who may hear it also. Through Jesus Christ, our

9 John 4:29

Lord, Amen.

(audio ends)