

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

Paul's Epistle to Titus
Chapter 1
Lesson 2

Editorial Note: What follows is one of a series of Bible lessons on the book of Titus.

These lessons were delivered to the Grace Bible Church in Detroit, Michigan sometime between 1967 and 1972. Sidney Cox was 80 years of age in 1967.

Sidney and Violet Cox resided in Detroit during their retirement years. In 1962, they retired to the Salvation Army retirement home in Detroit, "The Eventide." Violet was in failing health and ultimately died in 1967. Sidney continued residency there until a late in life move to Birmingham in 1972.

During the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance ("CMA"). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a "denomination." Grace Bible Church was a CMA church to which Sidney and Violet belonged during their years in Detroit. Sidney was often asked to lead Bible studies such as this study of Titus, and often filled their pulpit to preach.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

But for this morning again, we are turning our hearts I trust to this lovely thing that we call, The Epistle to Titus. You'll remember certain things that we said about it. You may turn, if you wish, to the first chapter and the first two verses. Because we do not expect to get any further than that. We were in the first verse last week, and we shall approach the second one and take our shoes off as we do so I trust. The second verse. Afterwards we may get a little further along then consider some of the characters that are there, the man who wrote the letter, the man who received it, the elders who are involved in this, in these churches on the Island of Crete. We may say a word or two about the Island of Crete itself. We may say something about the place where the problems seem to be centered in the members of these churches on the Island of Crete.

But for this morning, we're going to pass these things by, and just remind ourselves of one or two things. First of all, the Epistle to Titus is one of the three letters spoken of as the, Pastoral Epistles. And they're not three separate units, they're three united things. And there is a union between them. They all have the same message. They don't emphasize it in just exactly the same way, but there is in the heart of it, the great central message. And you'll remember that we emphasized that and reminded you of it last week. The great central message of the Pastoral Epistles is simply this: there is a truth that brings into being, God's children. There is a truth that is seen in the lives of God's children in godliness. There is a truth that brings hope of eternal life. Now I've stated three of the greatest things that you can find either in the Bible or out of it. And they're all before us right in the opening of the door of this little thing that we call, The Epistle to Titus.

You'll remember that we reminded you last week, that in the epistle, First Epistle to Timothy, we are to protect it. In the second one, proclaim it. And in the Epistle to Titus, practice it.

One of the things that we said last week was that we were going to give you occasionally an outline of this letter. As a matter of fact, we'll give you several, because we shall be continuing along this pathway, I trust for several weeks. But we could give you several of them, and you will notice all of them are very simple indeed. I like outlines, but I don't like the outlines where you find yourself so bewildered that you have to be a theological engineer to find your way through. And when you do find your way through, sometimes there's a danger of coming out the other end with some strange notions.

I like the simple things here, and you'll find them all the way through. This one for instance. Notice this. Chapter One: an orderly church. You remember the mission that was given to Titus, "Set in order the things that are wanting."¹ Chapter Two: a sound church. And one of the things we ought to do is to underscore repeated words. And you will find in chapter two the word, "sound" is repeated three times- sound doctrine, sound faith, sound speech. And they're right there before you. You can't possibly miss it. "Sound"- one of the big words in the epistles of Paul all the way through. You'll find it in his very last one, where he said, "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."²

And you go on a little further and you'll find the sound mind expresses itself in sound speech, sound words. And when the sound words are arranged in proper order, they become sound doctrine. That's what sound doctrine is. It's simply sound words arranged in proper order. And you find it all the way through, these wonderful words that may be incidental to us. And I hope they won't be - that they'll attach something of their majesty and a wonder of their sound as we listen to them.

A practical church. There are ten reasons given in the third chapter, why we should live our faith, the practical church. One of these days, if the Lord gives us time and opportunity, we may get to consider and think about some of those ten things that are said in the third chapter as to why we ought to live what we believe.

Now we've got this as an outline. If you care to make a note of it, so much the better - an orderly church, a sound church, a practical church. And when we turn to the characters that are there, we mentioned them a few moments ago, and we come to the elders, may I remind you that the word, "elders" as used by the Apostle Paul in two different ways. Here in this book, the elders are those who are appointed to local authority within the local church. That's the sense in which we get here. That when you turn to the beginning of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and find the word "elders" you've got something all together different. The elders there are those who have lived long before there was any written revelation at all - the people who lived on the earth before there was a written revelation from Adam to Moses, the elders there. And it's amazing when you turn to the first, to that eleventh chapter of Hebrews, it's amazing what these elders knew. And what they believed. There wasn't the slightest question in their minds, remember, as to who created the universe. Not the slightest. And they not only knew it, they understood it as well. Isn't it amazing that folks without any revelation written would know this kind of thing. Have you ever pondered how they would do that? Have you ever

¹ Titus 1:5.

² II Timothy 1:7.

thought how they would get to know that? Because there is an answer to that question too, and some day we might get around to that as well. But here we have this introduction there.

Now, I want us to turn if you please, once more in our thought to the two great thoughts that are before us: the truth that produces godliness, verse one; and the hope that guarantees eternal life in chapter two. Now, you can't set your mind on anything that's greater than that: a truth that produces godliness, a hope that guarantees eternal life. And here we have these two things.

I want us to ponder just a little bit at that word, "hope," and remind ourselves of this - that when you meet it here, you can see it in an entirely different way to what you meet it when you're out there in the general realms where we live, because with our great words, the greatest of the words, our words like "faith," and "hope," and "love," there's always the two sides of them: the natural expression of it, and the spiritual expression. And the two are entirely different. And God puts them side by side, in order that we may see the truth as we look at the two things in contrast. There's natural faith, and there's saving faith at all. Saving faith, my dear, is entirely different to the natural faith that you're exercising right now. Now that's the first time you've thought this morning that you're exercising natural faith, but there it is. Not one of us has thought this morning whether the bench we're sitting on is going to let us down or not. Not one of us. We sat down on it in faith. We walked into this room, not one of us thought whether we'd go through to the basement. Not one. Not one. We exercised our natural faith. When it comes to spiritual faith, and the faith that brought you into the family of God, that's an entirely different thing. That is the gift of God. Not a natural thing at all. The same thing with hope on the other side. Same thing with love. You've got natural love out here, you have supernatural love that is shining to us and for us right out of the book of God.

I want us to concentrate a moment or two on that word, "hope" - the hope of eternal life. What does it mean? What does it mean? What's the difference between hope here and hope out there, where we live, because we live in a world, you know, that's just filled with hopes, and most of them are dead. Hope. What's the difference? What is natural hope anyhow? What is it? How do we see it? Well, we see it everyday and in everything we do. And _____ transient character, there is nothing of lasting eternal value about it at all. Not anything at all. There is nothing of absolute certainty about natural hope. Nothing. We say, "We hope it'll be a fine day." But in case it isn't, I'm going to take my rain coat. We hope we'll get to our journey's end, but you better fasten your seatbelts. We hope this and hope that and hope the other, and constantly we are saying, "we hope" something. We hope the war in Vietnam will soon be over, and many, many, many a mother and father have stood and looked out into space and said, "I hope my boy will come back again." But there is no guarantee of it, is there? And many of them have looked down into a hole in the ground, and buried their hopes there. That's the story of life. Life is one succession of hope that flickers for a moment and then is buried. And I'm not talking about somebody's life elsewhere, I'm talking about your life and mine. There's a great segment of our lives, everyone of us, that has just been one succession of buried hopes. And if you don't know which of I'm talking about, I sure do. I've buried a hundred hopes, and so have you. So have you. Hope - there's no element of absolute certainty in it out there, the hope that's there. We hope it'll be a fine day, but we'd better take our umbrella or our rain coat. We hope this, and we hope the other. This transient thing that we call hope. Hope. And we bury it, just one after the other. This old world of ours is one vast cemetery for the burying of dead hopes. And we look at it here.

There was a great poet who once described this in words that are majestic, this transient feature of natural hope, only he calls it worldly hope. Same thing. And this is what he said:

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
turns ashes – or it prospers; and anon,
Like snow upon the desert’s dusty face
It lights a little hour or two and is gone.³

Did you hear it? “It lights a little hour or two and it’s gone.” “Like snow upon the desert’s dusty face.” Do you see it? Now, I’m not going to tell you who wrote that. I’ll tell you afterwards if you ask me. But I know you won’t. But you ought to know who wrote that. You just ask the one simple question, “What poet would know more about the desert’s dusty face than anybody else.” You’ll probably get the answer, and where he lived. He certainly didn’t live in Michigan, did he? Not at all. We don’t know anything about it, but here was somebody who said that hope is, “Like the snow that lies for a moment or two upon the desert’s dusty face, and then it’s gone.”

And you say, well why are we talking about this, because this is the very thing that we need to see, in order to see the glory and contrast of the thing that lies before us. This is natural hope. But we’ve got something better than that. Glory be to God! We’ve got something that lasts for eternity that’s the guarantee of eternal life. Hope which is the guarantee of eternal life. Turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews and you’ll find it again. It’s the anchor of the soul. The men outside with their buried hopes don’t know anything about that. They haven’t got any anchor of the soul. They haven’t got anything that’s sure and certain. No, no, no. And against the dark and somber background of natural hope, we look at this glorious thing that leaps at us out of this page, and we say, the hope of eternal life, the guarantee of it.

Why is it that in the spiritual realm, hope is a certainty, and in the natural realm an uncertainty? Why? Why? Because hope, my dear, in the spiritual realm is under girded by a promise and backed up by the one who made the promise. Look at the verse two and you’ll find both of them. Do you see it? There’s the promise and the character of the one who made the promise. Any promise is only good, as good as the person who makes it. Here is a promise of eternal life, and it’s a certainty because underneath it is the promise of God backed up by the eternal character of a God who cannot lie. That’s the reason why it’s a certainty.

We use simple illustrations sometimes to just show the thing that we’ve got in mind. I’ve got something in my hands, you’ll probably recognize it, it’s worth 60 cents. Use to be worth a dollar, but it isn’t now. No. And you say as you look at it, “That’s money.” Well, no it isn’t money at all. This isn’t money, this is just a piece of paper. And this is a promise, that’s all. And somebody has promised that if I take this thing to any merchandise mart anywhere, I can exchange it for a dollar’s worth of merchandise or a dollar’s worth of transportation, or a dollar’s worth of pleasure, or a dollar’s worth of anything else. Why do we use a thing like this without any question? We don’t argue as to whether it’s good or not. Why? Because back of this simple thing that I hold in my hand, there is the might of the United States Government. And the signature of the man, who had, who was authorized to sign it. Why sure.

And back of the promises of God, this one of eternal life; back of it all, is the promise of God slain by his son in blood, and backed up by the eternal character of God who cannot lie. Marked, these promises. And yet we go pattering around there with all these things before us and all the power of God behind us,

³ Omar Khayyam – eleventh century.

and the voice of God echoing in our hearts. And we go around as if we're spiritual orphans sometimes. As if we had no right to take God's promise and take it to the Bank of Heaven and expect God would cash it for us. And he will every time. Every time, if it's signed by his son. Every time. And we go around as if we had no resources. We go around sometimes, wondering and wondering around. Wondering the way out of this and the thing or that or the other. And all the time, here's the promise of God. And we just haven't got spiritual sense enough to take it to God's bank and cash it.

And we say to ourselves, "My is it as simple as that?" Sure it is when you've got God back of it. It isn't as simple as that any other way. But when you've got God's promise backed up by the character of God, that's good anytime and anywhere. But, we go around so poverty stricken sometimes, when all the time there's something in God's bank awaiting for us and the promise right before our very eyes. And we don't know enough as Christians to go. Some of us don't want to know. There a lot of second class Christians, you know, who prefer it that way. They don't want to be anything else. And I say to my own heart, "Sidney Cox, I hope you're not one of them." I sure do. I sure do.

Somebody has said, "The Bible is the gathering place of the promises and the revelation of the one who made them." Did you hear that? "The Bible is the gathering place of the promises and the revelation of the one who made them." Now I will tell you who said that. That was said by one of our greatest Bible teachers of yesterday. I think it's yesterday now. A man whose name we seldom mention. I think he was an Australian, but he wrote the greatest book on Hebrews that I've ever read. And I'm referring to G. H. Lang. Did you ever hear his name? Did you? G. H. Lang.⁴ And he wrote the finest thing I've ever read on the Epistles of the Hebrews and no matter what he wrote, it's the finest thing you could ever read at all. And he said, "The Bible is the gathering place of the promises and the revelation of the one who made it." Oh my dear, don't you see? Don't you see what this is leading up to?

For here's a man, writing a letter. And he's writing a letter to a young man who is going to look after things on the Island of Crete, where there are a thousand problems. And he's writing him and saying, "Titus, this thing that we've been talking about, this majestic, marvelous, unbelievable truth that's going to be proclaimed by preaching, that God in his grace is with a special dispensation for it upon me. But not for me only, because I'm going to pass it right on to you. And you are going to do it just as much as me. And it's going to be just as much your message as it is mine. And we're going to tell the folks on the Island of Crete what we've been saying here - that there is a power that can transform a man, and from a sinner make him into a son of God. There is a power that can produce godliness in the lives of men. There is a hope that issues an eternal life. And we've got to tell them about it." Why of course. Why of course.

And an old man is writing here and saying to young Titus, "You go tell them about that. Never mind about a thousand other things. There are other people that can talk better than you can about that. Don't go and talk to them about civil rights. Tell them about righteousness. Tell them about God's righteousness, and how it can come by faith. Go tell them about it." What a message. What a message. What a message.

What else would do on the Island of Crete? Look at the difficulties and problems that are there, thousands of them almost. It seems as if they pile up, one upon the other, and almost shock you with the

⁴ George Henry Lang, aka G.H. Lang (1874 – 1958) was a noted Bible teacher, prolific author, and biblical scholar of his time. He was born in Southeast London. Early on, Lang affiliated himself with the Exclusive Brethren; but later in life, he affiliated himself with the Open Brethren.

magnitude of them. Yet, here's a message that can solve the problem. Here's a message that can answer the need. Here's a message that can produce the miracle in the life. Not only create us into newness of life, but clothe us in the righteousness of God, and give to us a hope that's absolutely sure that this life of ours thus created and thus clothed will issue an eternal life. How could it be otherwise? How could it be otherwise? The man is saying, "You go tell that to Titus. That's your message. That's your message. That's your message. Don't lower yourself down to the level of other things. A lot of folks just want to stay on the lower level, let them stay there. You stay up here."

And I'm wondering if he's saying anything to us. I'm wondering if he's saying anything to the Grace Bible Church, for instance. I'm wondering. What do we need? For there's a promise there for every need remember. There's a promise for every need signed in the blood of the son of God, and God is ready at any moment to cast that promise and make blessing out of the promise. What do we need? I don't know. I'm not going to give you any answer to it, cause I don't know. I know some of the things on the outside, but I don't know the deep needs. But this is a deep need, that's for sure. What is it? What do we need? What do we need? Here in the gathering place of the promises where we see the victor of the one who made them. We can take the promise of God, the Grace Bible Church, and take it to the cashier and God will honor it. I dare you to put it to the test, not only in your church, but in your own private, personal life. If you don't know anything about the glory of watching God work; if you don't know anything about the wonder of God making good his promises, oh I hope you'll discover it some day before it's too late. For it may be too late one of these days. We better take the promise of God, and turn it into blessing, while we have time and opportunity.

Next week we shall be talking a little more from the Epistle to Titus, and I hope you'll be praying. I hope you will.

Our Father let Thy blessing be upon this word. Cover up the thoughts that have been so obvious. Cover up the thing that makes it perhaps unacceptable. Oh God, our Father, we pray that this word may find its right place within these hearts of ours, that we may be personally and as a group rejoicing in the absolute certainty of our hope of eternal life. Thank you Lord for a book like this, and for folks who are willing to sit for 30 minutes and listen. Thank you Lord for them. In Jesus name, Amen.