

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

Paul's Epistle to Titus
Chapter 1
Lesson 4

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.

It is so very nice to see you all this morning and to welcome you once more to the morning service of the Grace Bible Church. This morning you will be hearing the fourth in a series of messages that we have been bringing based on Paul's letter to Titus, and if my calendar is correct there are six more morning messages to be delivered between this morning and the last morning of the month of May, which will give us a total of ten messages based on this remarkable letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to his co-worker, Titus.

Now, this morning it is not my intention at all to introduce any extended or formal review of what has gone before us. I shall just hope that you will be remembering certain things, certain incidents, certain characters that appear, certain great teachings that have been emphasized and underscored. I shall just hope that you will remember these. But for this morning, I shall not attempt any kind of a review, which is the usual thing that is done. When in a series of meetings one message is undertaken, the preliminary is usually a review of that which went before it. I shall not attempt that at all this morning.

What I do want to remind you of is this, and I'm quite sure that some of us who have been listening and perhaps reading our message and the letter to Titus, that we have been impressed with a sense of urgency about this letter. As if Paul writing it is saying, "Something has to be done, right now. This is a message that has to be dealt with, right now. Something has to be said, right now. Some problem has to

be dealt with, right now. We must not leave this until some mythical tomorrow - a tomorrow which may never come, and if it did come, then the problem might have developed to such a place where it could not be dealt with at all. It must be dealt with now.” And you can feel that sense of urgency all the way through this letter that Paul writes to his young friend, Titus.

Now, there are several reasons for this. One, right in the center of this letter in the center of chapter two, and almost in the exact center of the letter as far as number of words is concerned, you will find Paul’s reference to the coming again of the Lord. In that beautiful, beautiful verse there, regarding the coming again and the appearing of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. And whenever you find Paul dealing or even mentioning the coming again of the Lord, you can hear this sense of urgency. In every one of his letters, regardless of the destination of the letter, when you find him dealing with this matter of the coming again of the Lord, you can feel this sense of urgency. If we could see his face, you could see the earnestness there. You could hear it in his voice. You can hear it in the way in which he’s talking - this message of the coming again of the Lord; this blessed hope that what is in the heart of men, men purify themselves because of it. This blessed and wonderful thing is never a casual subject with the Apostle Paul. He is always excited about it.

And it makes us sometimes wonder what kind of Christians we are, because we can sing, and hear, and perhaps think about the coming of the Lord without any particular excitement at all, and without any rising of our spiritual blood pressure. We take it so casually, it’s just one of those things. I heard your singing this morning, while I was downstairs. You were singing the lovely song by Norman Clayton, “We shall see his lovely face, some bright golden morning,” and I didn’t hear any note of excitement in your voices while you were singing. It seemed just as casual as the rest of the things that you were singing that don’t matter very much. And here we were talking about the, “Golden morning,” when the Lord is coming, and when his face will appear over the horizon. And we were singing it without any particular rising of our emotions or our longings after him. It was just one of those things, doubtless we enjoyed it. But whenever you find Paul talking about it, it’s a matter of tremendous urgency. And right in the center of this letter, that he is writing to his friend, Titus, his co-worker there on the Island of Crete; right in the center of it, you can hear this wonderful word of the appearing, the apocalypse, the pushing aside of the veil, so that the loveliest of all lovely ones is going to appear and we shall see him as he is. And there’s a note of excitement. There’s a lamp, there’s a light right in the center of the letter, and the light from it colors everything that has gone before it, and illuminates everything that follows it. And right in the center of this letter to Titus is this blessed and beautiful word regarding the coming again of the Lord, the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing. Not just the appearing, the “glorious” appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now that’s one reason why there is a note of urgency in this letter. The other is equally obvious. Paul knows that his ministry is rapidly drawing to a close. Only by the intervention, the miraculous intervention of God, would he be here at this particular time, writing to his friend, Titus. He had been before Nero before, you can hear the...read the account of it in the last verses of his last letter, where he writes to young Timothy. And in the midst of his distress, he says, “I was there facing this lion, and

God delivered me and I had to stand there all alone, but God delivered me from the mouth of the lion.” And it’s quite evident that in the mind of the Apostle Paul, he knew that it was only a temporary respite - this brief period when he was released from one imprisonment and made several missionary journeys, including a journey to the Island of Crete. But he knew quite well that it was only a question of time before he would be back again, and this time his imprisonment and his condemnation would be terminal.

And Paul knew all about it. What he had to do, he had to do right then. Oh that we might catch something of his spirit and know that what we have to do for the Lord must be done and done right now. And so his ministry was closing. You’ll recall that it happened not very long after this letter was written. We do not quite know just where this took place, but in the interim, Nero had set fire to Rome and had blamed the catastrophe upon the little innocent group called the Christians, and it was of course a necessity that the leader of this crowd should be captured at once. And so there, probably in Tarsus, in the home of his friend, Carpus, Paul was taken so rapidly and rudely that he didn’t even have time to gather up his winter overcoat, or his precious parchments, and he mentions this in his last letter that he is writing to Timothy. And so there was a second reason for the urgency. Paul’s ministry is rapidly drawing to a close.

There is another reason for it as well, and that is the danger that was increasing, as far as the Christian church is concerned. Everywhere Paul was facing the encroachments and the attack of Satan from two different directions - the Judaizers on one side and the Gnostics on the other, and church after church was being destroyed. One of the things that you hear in this final letter that he wrote to young Timothy is the heartbreaking cry that, “All that be in Asia have turned away from me.” And you can hear the individual cry when he says, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world and is departed unto Thessalonica.” And here is this man with the heartbreak as he.....It would almost appear as if Satan is concentrating his attack on this beautiful, young thing that had appeared in the earth, this Christian church. As if he were determined to blot it out before it could ever come to maturity. And you can hear the urgency in the voice of the Apostle Paul as he writes about it and writes to his friend, Titus. And there is this note of almost heartbreak that you can hear there.

Now in addition to that, there is something that is, that we have observed, and that is that at the beginning of this letter there is a most elaborate and lengthy introduction, which is quite unusual. Mostly the introduction of the letters to Paul are very brief, but in this case it is a lengthy and elaborate introduction. You may remember that we read the first sentence of this letter to Titus, and it had in it 90 words. And we read it all together. But here is this unusual thing again, and the reason for this of course is that Titus, facing the most difficult task that he would be facing here on the Island of Crete would need all the instruction, and not only that, but he would need all the authority that Paul could give him, so that when he faced these difficult and dangerous problems that were there, that he would be able to give the word, not only that he might be speaking, but the word that the Apostle Paul had been speaking also. And behind it all, the note of apostolic authority. And this is one of the, these are the reasons why we find that this letter is rather unusual, because of the urgency in it, and because of this concentrated and elaborate introduction to it. And we can see some reason for that.

Now, for just a moment, let's pause and catch our breath for a moment. And I want to give you another of these simple little, three-line outlines of this letter to Titus. Now this will be the third one. You have already received two. Here is a similar one. Chapter one - church officers. Chapter two - church enemies. Chapter three - church influence. Did you bring your notebook this morning? Have you made a note of that? Just a simple word. Three words - offices, enemies, influence. And it will give you another brief, but workable and thinkable outline of this lovely letter.

Now, we shall consider the path of the epistle itself. And we're making some progress now. But you will find three things that you are facing - One, the man to whom the letter is addressed. Two - the mission that was committed into his hands. And third - the mission field, where he is to work.

Now Titus is the man of course, and he stands before us, and I do not think we need to spend a great deal of time discussing Titus. We know something about him. There isn't too much to be known about him anyway. But we know certain facts, and we'll just review for a moment some of the things we do know and let it go at that. He was one of the two men who worked perhaps more closely with the Apostle Paul than anybody else - Timothy and Titus. Titus was probably a man a little older maybe than Timothy. He was a man, again, physically stronger, because Dr. Luke didn't have to give him any prescriptions for his stomach ulcers as he did for young Timothy. And you can detect also in the writings, that Paul is not quite so anxious about the welfare of Titus as he evidently was about the welfare of young Timothy. But there he is, this man who stands there and the beautiful word that Paul says about him regarding their relationship in the gospel, "My son in the gospel" or in the common faith as it is mentioned here. The gospel here and the common faith are synonymous terms.

Here is a spiritual relationship that is so beautiful, far more precious than any physical and natural relationship could ever be. Here is the relationship where one spiritually-minded man becomes united with another. And this after all is the most precious thing, because it is the only thing that will persist after the grave. Natural relationships, unless they contain a spiritual element to them, will die when the grave closes, and it will end. But where spiritual relationships are involved, this will go on and on and on and on. And one of the most beautiful things that we find in the scripture is this lovely thought that there can be relationships between one person and another so that there becomes an involvement there that is more precious than any earthly thing could ever be, and goes on and on into eternity. There is a place where spirits blend, where friend holds fellowship with friend. And where there is a united spiritual connection. And such a moment came to Paul and his friend, Titus.

Another of the things that you notice here in this letter right at the beginning of it as we are following the path, is this beautiful three-fold salutation, peculiar to the Pastoral Epistles - grace and mercy and peace. Here is this lovely thing. And the word that I want us to dwell on for a moment is not grace or peace, but rather the word mercy. Because grace and peace can sit down beside you and be quite comfortable. And you can sit down beside these words and be quite comfortable, too. But, you can't sit down beside the word mercy and be comfortable at all. Because mercy is a word that is used in connection with God's dealings with those who are deeply concerned about their sin - desperately concerned about the dark shadow of sin that was in, that is in their own lives. Mercy and misery both

E:\Sidney Cox Library Project\Subject Folders\Titus. Grace Bible Church. Late 1960s. Detroit, Mich\Titus Lesson 4.doc

come from the same source, the same word. And mercy is God's answer to man's deepest misery. And there is no disturbance, no misery that is so deep and so disturbing as that which comes when we honestly face the fact of our own sin and look into the face of God for his merciful dealing with us and throw ourselves upon his goodness and his grace and the blood of Christ. Mercy. Here it is right in the very center. How often do we find it as we trace it and think of it? How often we hear of it in God's dealings with Israel? How often mercy was needed in God's dealings with his rebellious and backsliding people? And over and over again you see it. You see mercy and pardon linked together. Isaiah talks about it, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and he will have mercy and abundantly pardon"¹ And sometimes you can hear the psalmist singing an anthem of praise to God - "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever."² This is the great word that is there, the mercy seat. This is the blood sprinkled word that is there. And we're hearing it in this beautiful salutation that comes.

There was a hymn that was written a good many years ago by a German Christian, a great poet. And it was translated into the English language by none other than John Wesley himself, which gives you some idea of the age of this particular hymn. But it is a hymn in which the mercy of the Lord is central and where you can see it in all of its majesty. I wonder if you know it? It appears occasionally in some old-fashioned song books, not of course in the modern ones, where we are so absorbed with the joy, joy, joy side of life. But you can hear it sometimes, and it goes something like this. The first verse goes like this, "Now I have found the ground where in sure my soul's anchor may remain. The wounds of Jesus for my sin before the world's foundation slain. Whose mercy shall unshaken stay, when heaven and earth are fled away." And the second verse tells us, "Oh, love, thou bottomless abyss. My sins are swallowed up in Thee. Covered is my unrighteousness, nor spot of guilt remains on me. While Jesus' blood through earth and skies. Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries."³

How Paul rang the changes of it, "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God."⁴ And back in the temple, a man lifted up his eyes, and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."⁵ Once more we find the

¹ Isaiah 55:6-7.

² Psalm 89:1.

³ *Now I Have Found The Ground Wherein*. Words: Johann A. Rothe, in *Christ-Catholisches Singe- und Bet-Büchlein*, by Nikolaus L. von Zinzendorf, 1727 (*Ich habe nun den Grund gefunden*); translated from German to English by John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1740. Music: Old 23rd, *Divine Musical Miscellany*, 1754; arranged by John F. Bridge (1844-1924)

⁴ Romans 12:1.

⁵ Luke 18:13.

repetition of a great phrase, three-fold. This is the second time we've observed something like this. "The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior" occurs three times in this lovely letter that we are considering.

Now, let's look a moment at the place where Titus was working and where the problems were that had to be solved, and where something had to be completed. It was the Island of Crete. "Now left I thee in Crete."⁶ By the way, did you ever try to find out something about Crete? You may remember that in our first message to [you] from this letter, we didn't attempt to give any details about Crete, we simply threw out the suggestion that perhaps you'd like to investigate this for yourself - find out what you can about Crete. What did you find out? Did you find out the size of it? Where it is located in the great Mediterranean Sea? Where is it located? Have you found it on your map, and if not why not? You've got your maps right there in the back of your Bible. Have you found it? If some child were to ask you, your own child for instance, "Daddy, where is the Island of Crete?" What would you say to him? Would you be able to draw him a little map and show him there as any father would to an inquiring child? What would you do? Do you know anything about the Island of Crete? Well, you can easily locate it there, because here's this thumb-like section of what we call Asia Minor jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea. And then a little further over a few miles away, there are the fingers of what we call Greece reaching down into the Sea. And between the two, the thumb of one and the fingers of the other, lies this island about 120 miles long, about 40 miles wide.

Isolated probably because it seemed as if the people on the Island of Crete had either deteriorated into a very dark and dismal crowd, so much so that even their own pagan poets gave words that seemed to indicate how far down these people were in the level of human living. You'll remember that one of their poets there in [Chapter 1] Verse 12 said, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." And I'm not going to attempt to expound that or interpret that. We know in general what that would mean. And here they were, these folks that were living on this low level, and it was amongst these people that the problems existed and where things had to be set in order. And thus we have before us this very thought that indicates how difficult is the problem that young Titus would be facing when he attempted to set in order the things that were wanting, either in the church or the churches on the Island of Crete. There's a difference of opinion there. There are some who feel that perhaps it is one church, there are others who feel it is more than one. But it doesn't matter, it doesn't make any difference. There they are anyhow. And here are these Cretian people living down on this low level.

There are three levels where people live, you know. There a few live on the gold and silver levels - second chapter of second Timothy. There is the place where most of us live, on the wood and earthenware level, and most of us are down on there. And then there are others who sink down to the depths, who live in the miry clay area. And it seems almost, as if the people on the Island of Crete were down there in that miry clay area - many undesirable, personal characteristics about them. By the way, Paul is the only New Testament writer who quotes from heathen writers, or pagan poets, if you prefer that.

⁶ Titus 1:5.

Three times he does it. And if you have your pencil and paper and would like to get the references, here they are: Titus 1:12, Acts 17:28, and I Corinthians 15:33.

Now it is quite evident that Paul, with Titus, had visited this place in between his imprisonments, knew the problems, and Titus was there to complete the work that together they had started and to set in order the things that are wanting. It was only a temporary mission, for Titus was to remain there until the task had been completed. But we find it's the same old pattern all the way through. There are personal problems and church problems, of course. But all the personal problems and all the church problems are so familiar. We can see them there - problems in the home, problems in the relationship with others, problems within the church, problems within the community. They're all first, personal problems and then church problems. And it's quite interesting to notice the method by which these difficulties were to be dealt with. Wasn't a matter there of providing the _____ textbook, saying you must do this or you mustn't do that. Not at all. The plan was simple, and it is always God's plan to put somebody in the midst of a situation like that, where in whose life the problem does not exist. And in contrast, those in whose lives the problem does exist can see and hear eloquently the message of a life that is clear of it. And so these men who are spoken of, first as elders and then as bishops, these men are to be clear and clean in their family life, and in their commercial life, and in their community life. These men who are clean and clear of this thing, appoint these. And this is God's method always.

And I have been wondering as we have been considering in this simple way, this message that comes to us from the introductory part of this letter to Titus. I've been wondering what has it had to say to you? And what has it had to say to the Grace Bible Church? What does it say? Because unless, my dear, some word has come to you personally, and unless some definite word has come out of the midst of it here to this Grace Bible Church so dear to all of us, then you have just been listening to the sound of a voice and that's all. But has something been said to you? What did mercy have to say to you? Did it suggest to you that perhaps one of the reasons for the unrest that's in your heart and life is because there is some sin that has not been dealt with or some sin that remains there unconfessed? Is there something in the Grace Bible Church that is the result of personal problems in our homes and in our lives? I make this suggestion to you because unless there is some definite personal word to us, in that which you have been listening to, may have been interesting, but it will not have any lasting value unless God has said something to each one of us and unless deep within our hearts we respond in total obedience to that which God has in mind for us. And thus, we bring to a conclusion the fourth in our series of messages on the Epistle to Titus.

Our Father, we pray that Thou take care of this message as it's been delivered faultily and in weakness. But Thou canst guard it and make it of eternal value to somebody. We pray that in the midst of all the sounds that we have been listening to for the last half an hour, that there has been something there that would indicate the voice of God has been speaking to us. Help us to obey without hesitation and help us to bring the deep need of our heart to the blood of Christ, where the stains may be cleansed and where the problem may be solved through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.