

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

Paul's Epistle to Titus
Chapter 1
Lesson 6

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.

Remarkable little book. Three chapters. Very short. You can read it through in just a few minutes. I have been having unspeakable joy in starting the day by reading through the Epistle to Titus each day. And I shall always be grateful for the discipline that led me to concentrate on this. There will be four additional messages, probably during the month of May to complete the series of ten messages on this letter that we speak of as, The Epistle to Titus.

I think it's been an interesting and pleasant pathway. We have enjoyed some of it. We don't always enjoy the scriptures. Sometimes when the scripture deals with us and reveals things within our own hearts that shouldn't be there, and then shows us the way out of our perplexity, it's not always a pleasant thing. But, it's always a profitable thing. And while every step along this pathway that we have been traveling may not have been pleasant all together, some of it has, but it's all profitable. And we have been listening, I hope, with our hearts as well as with our ears.

One of the five warnings that you will find in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that warning against having ears, but failing to hear. There are five warnings in the beginning of that epistle, and this is one of them. It's the central one - having ears, but failing to hear, because failure to hear, my dear, does something to your heart. And that's the next of the warnings in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that if we fail to hear, hardness comes to our hearts. And whether we like it or not, that's so, because if we hear the Word of God and fail to do anything about it, that is fail to let it sink down into the depths of our lives so that it touches the springs of our wills and our responses; if we fail to do that, then you can be quite sure that something's going to happen to our hearts. And that is inevitable.

Now, let's listen if you please, not to me, God forbid, but to the Word of God itself as it comes to us this morning. And right at the beginning, I want to read to you the final verses of chapter one of this letter. This will be the sixth message on this particular chapter, and here it is and this is what it says. Verse six;

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife.”

He's describing now what kind of a man will be appointed under God to receive God's equipment to solve the problems that are present on the Island of Crete and in the churches. Here's the description of the man. God's remedy for any malady, always begins with a man, never with a doctrine. It's always the man. Into the hands of the man, right with God, is then placed the remedy. And here we've got it. What kind of a man will be appointed? A man to undertake such a colossal, terrifying task as dealing with these difficulties on the Island of Crete - setting in order the broken bones and straightening the crooked limbs, as we were considering last week. Here's the description of him. He must be blameless. What a good thing it didn't say faultless, because we wouldn't have found anybody then. You can find an occasional person who is blameless; you can't find anybody faultless. But here is the word:

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own said, “The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.” This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”

And now the last verse in that chapter, and I want you to notice four terrible words that are there. Because this gives us, perhaps, in concentrated form what a terrific task it was to straighten out things on the Island of Crete, particularly the things that attracted the churches. The island was bad enough, but when these things creep into the church, what a tremendous task that is. And it gives us some idea of how great is that task when we notice these four terrible words. And they're all in this last verse. Notice, if you please, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work, reprobate.” Now you will look a long way before you can find a verse that has four such terrible words, all concentrated in one short verse. Denial. Abominable. Disobedient. Reprobate. And in case you are wondering, reprobate means, “God-forsaken.” Now here's the verse that describes the problem that's there.

Now we've been following the pathway of this letter and we have stopped here and there. And I believe with some satisfaction, we've stopped to notice the man who wrote it. We've stopped to notice the unusual introduction - the first sentence with ninety words in it; a most unusual thing. Usually the introduction is a short thing and then plunging right into the body of the letter and the purpose of it. But here was a most unusual thing. An introduction where the first sentence was ninety words long. And we've noticed the place, the Island of Crete. We noticed the mission that had been given to Titus. We

noticed the problem people that were there. And we noticed last week that the focal point of the difficulty rested in words that were difficult, personal, poisonous; these words that were destructive and words that destroyed whole households, and words that were twisted into false doctrine that sounded so right that the purveyors of these false doctrines were able to pedal them from place to place and even get money for this. They did it, "For filthy lucre's sake." And that's the story we have before us right now.

Now, my dear, what is God's remedy for this kind of thing? Because, and I'm looking right at you when I say this, and right at myself too, you may find some little echo of this difficulty even in a life as nice as yours and that looks so right as you do. You may find a little echo of it right down in your own heart. What does God do when there is a malady of this kind? What is God's inevitable, only remedy for this kind of thing? Well now you can find it quite easily. First of all, as we have mentioned, men are appointed - men in whose life the radiance of God's truth shines until God's approval rests upon them. That's where it always starts - a man upon whom the approval of God rests. Now that's the beginning of it. We caught a sound of God's requirement. What God's approval would mean in the appointment of a man who was from amongst the older people, which is the meaning of the word elders. And when he is appointed to a position in the church, then he becomes a bishop or an overseer, and you heard the words this morning. But he's a man of maturity, a man in whose life there is no spot, there is no taint, there is nothing that can be against him, and such a man is appointed as the one who will hold in his hand and use for God, the equipment that God will place in his hands.

What will he place in the hand of a man like that? Here's a man that God appoints for the solution of a problem that is absolutely beyond anybody else but God himself. What will he place in his hand? What? Money? Buildings? The usual things that we think of as equipment? What will he place in his hand? He will place in the hand of this man right with God, and we spell right in capital letters. He'll place in the hands of a man like that one thing, and it's spoken of here as, "The faithful word." Did you hear it? Did you catch that word there? Let me read it to you again, "Holding fast the faithful word." Now that's God's equipment placed in the hand of a man who is right with God in capital letters. And this is God's way, the faithful words. And then we read that lovely little comment on it or the thing that flows out of it that is spoken of as, sound doctrine.

Now sound doctrine, my dear is simply the faithful word arranged in proper order, so that it could be understandable, usable, teachable. It becomes intelligent, and so that later we may adorn it, make it beautiful. Now that's the meaning of the word adorn. Now sound doctrine is simply the faithful word arranged in proper order. If you want scripture for that, you will find it in Second Timothy, first chapter, sixteenth verse, and you will find there, or the thirteenth verse, and you will find these words, "The form of sound words." Sound words, the faithful word arranged in proper order. In proper form, so that they become intelligible, usable, and we're able to pass them on with some degree of success to somebody else. Now that's what sound doctrine is. And I want to tell you, my dear, that when anybody undertakes to arrange the faithful words into some kind of a doctrine or order, he needs wisdom greater than his own. For if there is a point where we can get astray, it's right there. Where we need the constant approval and guidance of the Holy Spirit to guard and guide us while we arrange God's word into what we call doctrine. And if there is one point where our little mini-minds need God's help, it's right there. It sure is.

Here are men who are undertaking a task like this so that when the day that the doctrine sounds out, it sounds out like a bell without a crack in it, which is the meaning of the word, "sound." It's a sound

doctrine. And you can hear the glory and the tone and loveliness and majesty of it - a bell without a crack in it. Now this is God's way of solving problems that can never be solved any other way. To take a man four square with the will of God. To take the truth that has been arranged in proper order as the Holy Spirit directs it. And in the hands of a man like that, God has the remedy for the deepest darkness that Satan can bring upon us. And it's the only remedy. That's been God's way from the beginning, and he hasn't changed it one bit. He hasn't tried to bridge the generation gap in his methods of solving the deep problems of in the heart of men. Not at all. That's the only way. Men who are right. Truth that is right. An arrangement that is right. And God brings this as the only answer, the all-sufficient answer for the need however deep and dark that need may be.

Did you notice the way in which that thought is introduced? It's introduced by the two little words, "Holding fast." Did you hear that? Holding fast the faithful words. Holding fast? Well now that might be a startling word, but if it just means what it sounds like on the outside, it's a very discouraging word. If holding fast the faithful word means that this hand of mine reaches out and holds something that we call the faithful word, that isn't encouraging to me at all. And I'll tell you why, I happen to know the weakness of this hand. I've lived with it for a long time. I know how easily it can let go its grip. I know if holding fast means that I've got to do it, then I might just as well stop right now. Does it mean that? That the faithful word is something out here and this feeble hand of mine has got to grip it and hold it fast? That something of eternal value depends on that; God forbid! Because, my dear, and you'd better listen to this with your heart as well, the faithful word, my dear, is not something, it's someone! And when you are talking about someone, he has a hand as well as mine! And holding fast, dear, is not at all a question of this feeble hand holding onto something whatever it might be. Not at all. It's a matter of two hands. I'm holding onto somebody, not something at all. And somebody is holding onto me.

If I took a grip on something with this hand, and took a grip on it, almost anybody in the congregation could loosen that grip. But when I take a grip this way and hold it, hold fast means this - watch it! If hold fast means this, and it does...then you try to break that grip. And it'll keep the strongest of you busy, to try and break that grip. And I'd be glad to demonstrate it for you. You try it. You get this grip, so that His hand is holding mine. That's what hold fast means, is when we reach out to hold God's truth, and to make it what it ought to be and to let it flow out of our hearts. It's not just a question of my weak hand, but His hand holding with me. And you know which hand really counts in that matter, don't you?

One of the gracious and lovely things that the Word of God and our precious Lord allows us to think, is that our weak hands have got some value after all, and I expect they have. But you know whose hand really matter, don't you? Where the strength lies. It's not my faithfulness, but His. It's not my weakness, but His strength. That's the thing that matters. And holding fast, my dear, is this way, not just this way. You get hold of that truth, or else, you will find yourself in quagmires indescribable if holding fast simply means the strength of your hand holding onto something. But when it's His hand and my hand coming together in a grip that's almost unbreakable, and when it's His hand, it is unbreakable. And we hold the faithful word like that, and that's the only way. That's the only way. And we'd better remember it and get it deep down in our hearts, or we're going to be in difficulties indescribable.

A man was walking along a road one day with his little 8-year old boy. And always nice, father and son, having a nice time together, as fathers and sons ought to do. And they walked along the road, but a little way along there they came to a shadowy place where the trees overarch the road, and where a previous rainstorm had remained instead of being cleared up. And where there was slippery rock, and this father said to the son, "Son, when we come to this place, I don't want you to be afraid of this. We'll get through all right, but there's a little bit of slippery rock there, and a little bit of darkness. And I think it would be well if you took a good grip on my hand while we go through this particular bit of road." And the little boy takes a grip on his father's hand. And when they get through, and out into the clear again, and the danger is past, father says to the boy, "Well, we made it, didn't we? We sure made it." And the boy says to the father, "Yes we did. We made it. And I sure did hold fast under your hand, didn't I?" Did you hear it? And you know and I know which hand really mattered in a moment like that, the little boy's grip on the father's hand or the father's grip on the little boy's hand?

Oh, my dear, you had better remember whose hand really counts in that life of yours. You'd better remember, because there's somebody watching. And if you forget for one moment, he won't forget. And he knows exactly what to do when that life of yours needs help, and he knows exactly what to do, and he'll do it, too. His hand or my hand? It's not a matter there of how strong I am, but it's a matter of how great and strong he is.

Now let me remind you of something - that the greatest privilege that has ever been given to any believer is the privilege of receiving into his hand the faithful word so that God can use both the person and the word. That's the greatest privilege that has ever been given to a believer. Let me give you scripture for that. In the second chapter of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he rejoices with joy unspeakable for this. He says, "I have been put in trust with the gospel." Did you hear that? "I have been put in trust with the gospel." A heart rejoicing, a light shining out of his face, his hands tingling with the thrill of it all. "I have been put in trust with the gospel."

Now, my dear, men have to be appointed on the Island of Crete, who are to be put in trust with the gospel. Their hands are to receive it. Their hands are to grip it and give it to somebody else. Their hands are to arrange it. Their hands are to pass it on. What kind of hands will they be? What kind? What? Stained hands? Tainted hands? Covetous hands? Oh, no. Not at all. Not at all. The only kind of hands God ever uses are clean hands. The only kind of hands God ever uses are untainted hands. These men must be like this. Here they must be. No wonder that we read there, that they must be right in the four different ways - their whole life, their personal life, their church life, and their community life. And into the hands of folks like that, God will place the remedy for the darkest situation, and he never does it any other way. That's always God's way. Sound mind. Sound words. Sound doctrine. Sound life. This is God's way.

Did you notice how Paul reads the changes on those? Second Timothy again, first chapter, and you'll find the pathway of it so clearly marked, "God has not given us a spirit of fear." Verse seven, in chapter one. "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." And when the sound mind expresses itself, it becomes sound words. Verse thirteen. And when sound words are arranged in proper order, they become sound doctrine. That's the pathway that leads. And into the hands of these men, such men as these, there is to be placed this remedy of sound words arranged in proper order, words in the heart of which there is life.

For remember if you please, that the Apostle Paul uses almost the identical words when he writes to the church at Philippi. And says there in the Philippians, the second chapter, and I believe the sixteenth verse, this is what he says, "The business of the church in Philippi was, "To hold forth the word of life." Holding fast the faithful word. Holding forth the word of light. And here are the two sides of the great work that God gives into the hands of men whose lives are worthy to hold it. Men whose lives are right with God and his requirements. These are the things.

Why the faithful word? Because, remember, the great central point of iniquity on that island and in that church rested in words. What are we going to do about words? What are we going to do about evil words? What are we going to do about words that are poisonous? What are we going to do about words that subvert whole households? And we reminded ourselves that the word subvert is the same word from which we get our word, "catastrophe." That brings catastrophe. The words that can be dressed up in a religious coating, until they can be peddled from house to house, and get money for it. And this is the situation. Now we've got a faithful word. Now we've got a living word that's God's counteracting agent for the darkness and difficulty that is all the way around us. False doctrine and rebellion and all the rest of these things that are there. The faithful word is still God's answer to it all.

Now, let's summarize it. And here is what it tells us. First, this is God's remedy. First, the appointment of men approved in Christ. Two - the light and power of the faithful word. Light to reveal the darkness; power to dispel it. There will be a revelation of the true nature of this darkness when the faithful word is shined upon it. Second again - that back of this truth there is the Spirit of Truth himself. And this is God's way and God's answer. God's remedy for the problem, my dear, that may be in your own life, and the problem, if any problem exists that may be in the life of the Grace Bible Church, or any other church. And God doesn't have any other remedy than that: faithful men, the faithful word, lived and handle by men whom God approves. That's God's remedy, and that is the answer to the deep, dark problems not only on the Island of Crete, but the problem that may be in your life, and even in the life of a church as beautiful as the Grace Gospel Church.