

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

Paul's Epistle to Titus
Chapter 2
Lesson 7

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.

I want you to turn once more, please to the Epistles to Titus. This will be our seventh message based on this lovely little letter. And I'm hoping that you have been enjoying as I have and that we may be sharing the thrill of it together. I had to ask the Lord to forgive me for something that I've been doing in years past about this little book. I have dared to preach on it and give one message on it and try to lap it all up together in one message. However I would have the whatever it is to do a thing like that. But, we know better than that now, don't we? We're not following any little wrapped up capsule or thought about this. We're trying to get what the word of God says here. And I think we've been enjoying it. It's wonderful to follow the pathway of it to see God's truth unfolding - sometimes by statement, sometimes by illustration and sometimes by character.

We saw the two great men that are mentioned in the beginning of it - Paul himself, and Titus, his young son in the gospel. "My very own son," when I was reading with delight in one of the translations. Not just, "My son in the gospel," but the emphasis on the word, "My very own son. My born son, in the gospel." And you can find it all the way through. You can see a relationship here that's beautiful, that's magnificent. And we saw the truth that will bring two hearts together like that and join them together. And we've been rejoicing in the sight of it and the sound of it.

We've been a little bit alarmed as we noticed the problem that is here so vividly in this little letter - the particular place that comes before us with such clearness. It's not always the same. When you read some of Paul's letters addressed to a specific place. The place seems foggy and indistinct. We don't know very much about it. What do you know about Colossae? What do we know about other places

similar to that? But we've got details here that are amazing regarding this island of Crete and the churches that were there. The detail is the problem that was there. How it arose? Where the difficulty came? Where the focal point of it was? In the words that were so destructive. In the words that were the first expressions of characters that were all together out of line with God's truth. As we've been watching it here. Words wrong. Men wrong. Characters wrong. Homes wrong. Churches wrong. And we've been almost overwhelmed by it as we have been considering it there.

And then as we go along, we found a little emergence of God's remedy for it. What is God's remedy for a malady like this? We begin to discern something of its outlines. We begin to see that God is following his own pattern of putting men that are right in the midst of a situation that is wrong. And that's always God's way. Always. Whenever God has to correct a situation that is wrong, he always puts man in the midst of it who is right. And you can see it there. Men that are right. Truth that is right. Words that are correct and right. And these are God's remedies, and you begin to see it emerging. You can see a little bit of it at the end of Chapter 1 that has occupied us for six messages. You begin to see a little bit of it. At the end of chapter 1 you see it in the church. You see it in the general area of the churches there on the island of Crete. You can see a little bit of it. You can discern what God is to do by this selecting of men.

But when you get into Chapter 2, you begin to see there much more in detail what God's plan is. It's a general statement of difficulties that are seen in the church in the end of Chapter 1. And it ends in an appalling statement that these people have so far gone away from God that God has turned his back upon them. God forsaken reprobates. And we look at it, and seek to grasp some of its meaning, and it seems that peace comes over us as we think of it.

And now we turn to Chapter 2, and we find the difference in locale. Instead of being in the church, particularly, it is now moved into the home. And I have sometimes wondered and reminded myself, and I hope I'm reminding you, that every problem that ever appears in the church is first a home problem. It's simply a magnified home problem. There isn't one problem that ever appears within a church that hasn't first appeared in the home. So when we begin to get details of it, we look straight at the house, and the home, and the people that are there, and what God has to say to them, and what he expects of them.

And so we have it before us this morning: this beginning of the details of dealing with these problems that are there. And we have it in this Chapter 2 that has to do particularly with the Christian home and its problems; and more particularly, the people that are there. We'll get a good look at folks here, not just the home in general. You'll see the people that make up the home, and what that God expects of them. And how he is meeting the problem of their own hearts and through them, the problem of others.

Now I want you to turn please to the first verse of the second chapter of Paul's letter to Titus. Now you will notice in this verse there are five stopping places. And I want us to pause a moment at each one of them. I want to read it to you, and then I want you to read it with me aloud. The second verse, or the first verse of the second chapter, and when we are finished, we will stop a moment for a word of prayer. Now listen while I emphasize with my voice, the five stopping places in this first verse for this is where we shall be spending our time for the next few minutes.

“But (pause) speak thou (pause) the things (pause) which become (pause) sound doctrine (pause)”. Did you notice the five stopping places? We’ll pause at each one of them. In the meantime, let us read it together, that first verse, if you please, now. “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.” Now there’s the beginning of the second chapter.

Our Father, we pray that thou will capture our hearts and our ears, and our thinking apparatus. And clear the fog away from our eyes. And clean out our ears, so that we may not only hear sounds, but we may hear thy thoughts. Give to us willingness to follow down the path of this verse, and stop here and there not merely to look at something on the outside, but to look at something on the inside as well. And so for this we pray, our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The word “but” is one of God’s great words. One of God’s big words. It’s a similar word to the word “therefore” or “where for.” And you will find it over and over and over again. And when you do, you will discover that at each appearance of it, you are turning a corner. Something has been left behind and we are now entering into something else. It may be a darkness, and here is God’s answer for it. It may be a problem within the church, here’s God’s answer for it. And you will find it over and over again, preceded by that little but very important word, “but.” But, God. And you will find it over and over again. I merely mention it to you this morning in the hopes that you will follow it through. It’s so obvious isn’t it? “Ye who sometimes were afar off and made nigh by the blood of Christ.”¹ “But God,” in the middle of it. We sometimes follow the course of this world. We follow the scent of our inner nature, and then we read, “But God, who is rich in mercy with a great love wherewith he has loved us.”² And, “But God” and you find it over and over again, the word. So don’t ever pass it by. Don’t ever let it slip away from you. But God, But God, But God, But God.

Right at the beginning of this, we find this same thought. Here is the problem of the darkness in the church, at, on the island of Crete. Here is God’s answer for it, preceded by this word, “But God, but God, but God.” God’s going to do something. We’re turning a corner. We were a long way away, but God who is rich in mercy. And here we find this word, stopping place please number one. Stop there and take a good look at it. God’s going to do something. What will he do? It ought to startle us into attention whenever we find a word like this, “But God.”

Now, “Speak thou.” Remember if you please, that the problem in the church on the island of Crete says it in words. Now what will God’s answer be? God’s answer will be words also. This is always God’s way. The wrong thing counteracted by that which is right, not something entirely foreign to it. The same thing, but right. A wrong character and a right one set side by side. The problem within the church, and the answer to it if the problem is words, then obviously the answer will be in words also. Where will the words come from? Oh we know they’ll come from Paul, certainly. We’ve already heard some of his words. We know that they’ll be coming from Titus, that’s so. Of course they will. We’ve already heard some of the things that Titus must be speaking. We’ve already seen that they will be coming from the elders, from those appointed, through petitions of responsibility in the church. We know about that. But does it come from anybody else? Is the voice of the church simply the voice of somebody in authority? Is it simply a one man business? Oh, no. Not at all. Every last one of us, and every last one of them will have a voice. “Speak thou” the things.

¹ Ephesians 2:13.

² Ephesians 2:4

And remember, my dear, that when you use those terms and apply it to yourself and reckon that that's your job to be proclaiming the message of God's remedy for the malady that's all the way around. And remember, that goes in two directions. What we have to say to somebody on the outside, and what we have to say to somebody on the inside. And we better remind ourselves, that we're not qualified at all to talk to people on the outside as to something that God says about their difficulty, until we have first listened to what God has had to say about our difficulty. The "Speak thou" applies first of all to ourselves. The most difficult person you will ever have to talk to, my dear, the most difficult person you'll ever have to deal with, the most difficult person you will ever have to persuade, the most difficult person you will ever have to convict, is not somebody on the outside. It's the person on the inside. You're the most difficult person you will ever have to deal with. And we'd better remember that in this matter of getting out God's truth, that the first person we must deal with is ourselves. We must talk to ourselves and come to the conclusion God wants us to come to regarding the problem that's in our own heart. There's where this big, the remedy begins: not with the words spoken to somebody on the outside, but to the words spoken to somebody on the inside? We're not qualified to talk to anybody on the outside, until we have spoken first of all, long and perhaps lovingly to our own heart.

Now, this is the lesson that these sort of people must learn. Don't go and talk to someone else about their problem, until you have first straightened out your own. Don't go and talk to someone about confessing their sins, until you have first confessed your own. Don't go and talk to them about flaws in their character until in the light of God's word you have honestly faced the flaws in your own. That's what it says. "Speak thou." It's a word that goes in two directions, and we'd better learn where it starts. It starts here, not out there. There's where it begins. How serious is this word that's coming here to these people through this word of God? "Speak thou" the things.

Remember that that's in the center of the problem, isn't it? Things. Things that were out of order. The words of Titus, "I'm leaving you behind on the island of Crete in order that you might set in order things that are wanted."³ We have been looking with our eyes and hearts appalled by the sight of the things that are out of order on the island of Crete. We have been dismayed, as we have looked at the broken bones of character, and the twisted limbs of false doctrine. The things that are out of order.

And now we're going to hear about the things that are in order, for that's God's remedy always. For a thing that is out of order, his remedy is things in order, and it begins with men who are in order. And we have been looking at it with some degree of considerable interest and maybe self examination. Things out of order. They must be put in order. We've heard voices that have been out of order. We've heard of voices of those who would be constantly contradicting and in opposition to anything of God's truth that could come into the church. We have been listening to the sound of voices that have been out of order in the silly conversations that are there: the, "profane and vain babbling" that Paul talks about when he writes to Timothy and are almost exactly the same words. The problem with was absolutely everywhere. And things out of order my dear, they have a voice. They begin to talk. They're not just things that are inanimate, that don't talk. These things out of order have voices and we've been hearing the sound of them. Now the things that are in order, they have their voices too. And the one must counteract the other, and that's God's remedy always. Always. Things must be in order.

Now, we come here and the voice that is to bring the remedy is the voice of, "Sound doctrine." This great truth that came into the heart and flowed out of the heart of both Paul and his friend, Titus. This

³ Titus 1:5.

thing that joined them together. This great faith that is there. This, "Sound doctrine." The truth that has now been arranged in proper order. Oh we have said over and over again, that's what sound doctrine means. It's simply truth arranged in proper order. And the great truths that have been flowing over our hearts are now before our eyes in this phrase, "Sound doctrine."

But there's a word of warning here. Did you notice? There's a word of warning here. It must be, the giving out of sound doctrine must be done in a certain way, and another way must be equally avoided. It must become sound doctrine. "As becometh" Notice verse three in this same chapter, "Behavior as becometh." Now it isn't a matter of behavior. It's not merely a matter of sound doctrine. We must present sound doctrine in a way that makes it becoming, acceptable, beautiful. It's our business to make doctrine, not only for real and the correct sound of it, but to add to it the beauty of it. "As becometh sound doctrine." And the loudest way in which any of us give out sound doctrine, is not with our lips at all, it's with our lives. "We are living epistles, read and known of all men."⁴ And the sound of the doctrine that flows perhaps unspoken out of our hearts and lives must be adorned as this very chapter tells us - dressed up in garments that will make it acceptable, so that the hands of the heart will eagerly reach out for it.

And let us remember that this word carries with it a warning, as well. When we're handling sound doctrine, we must handle it in a way that makes it acceptable. You can not force doctrine down anyone's throat; and persistence can sometimes be a pest. But here is the sound of it - when the beauty of it and the loveliness of it is seen in the light, and has becometh sound doctrine. Remember how Paul uses the word over and over again. You remember what he said to the folks in Rome when he sent Phebe there with the letter to the Romans? Said, "You will receive her as becometh saint."⁵ And you find it all the way through. Our business is not only to give out sound doctrine, but to make it beautiful, acceptable. We can give it out in a way that will repel rather than attract. Our business is to be wise enough by the gifts of the spirit within us to make doctrine attractive. We've got something here that is beautiful.

And on that Island of Crete, there had been ugly things all the way around. Now the utmost beauty is to be introduced. Sound doctrine. Doctrine that is sound, that rings like the bell with no _____ of error in it. They had been use to that all the way along. Ears had been crowded with it; their hearts had been offended by it - doctrine that was false, and that the Judaizers had been in it, and into it. And the Gnostics had been into it. And here all the way through, these abominable things that spoil doctrine. Now something is to become there that is crystal clear - the doctrine that makes saints, and the doctrine that puts within the hearts of the saints our hope for eternal life, and brings men like Paul, and Timothy, Titus, into an unbreakable union. This is the truth that is to be there.

And it's to start within the home. And one of the interesting things about this, and I shall not go into it, because this will be our further thought for when we continue it next week. But it's very interesting to notice the way where doctrine and where truth begins within the home. It doesn't begin with the teenagers at all. Not at all. It begins with grandfather, and it goes on to grandmother. And then it comes back. It begins where it belongs, where it ought to begin. Problems in the home don't begin down here, they begin up here. As we find the path of the truth that is before us.

⁴ II Corinthians 3:2, paraphrased.

⁵ Romans 16:1-2.

And so this book is unfolding before us, this lovely letter, it's unfolding before us. And we're thanking God along with you for the joy and privilege of looking into its depths and taking the cover off and rejoicing in it. These things that make for sound doctrine and sound living and sound character. God's answer. God's answer for Grace Bible Church: that into this church and by it, the sound of God's truth shall go out. But remember, that we shall be strangely hindered in anything we try to do for anybody else, unless first the truth has cleansed our own hearts, cleaned our own minds, brought us to the place of repentance, brought us to the place of confession of our sin. This is the word that comes to us this morning.

Our Father, we pray that as we have thought about it in this brief moment, that Thou wilt fasten the truth within our hearts, and give to us, we pray Thee, willing and constantly willing minds and hearts. That we may follow where Thou dost lead. That just as we gather around the Lord's table, unite our hearts we pray in this unusual way through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.