

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

Paul's Epistle to Titus
Chapter 2
Lesson 8

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.

Well, let's have a look at this letter again. We're getting quite use to it. We know something about the difficulties on the Island of Crete. They have come right close to our hearts. We have known something of the problems that are there. We know something of the particular difficulties that are mentioned here in the letter. It's amazing what detail is given to us. We're not in the darkness at all regarding the problems that are dealt with in this remarkable little letter of three short chapters, where you find the number, three so very frequently. For instance, you find that the problems themselves were under three headings. There were things that had to be set in order. Things that were out of order, they must now be set in order. There was false teaching all the way through the church. The Judaizers on the one side, and the Gnostics on the other were making inroads into the church in the matter of doctrine. That was the second of the problems. And then, of course, there was the pitiful problem of out-of-line behavior that was so common apparently on the Island of Crete and some of it had crept into the church. And these were the three things that are there.

And then we noticed that the remedy was in a three-fold manner, too. One, the appointment of elders in whose life there was absence of difficulty, where the shining of God's approval could be seen in them and from them. The appointment of elders. The giving out of sound doctrine to counteract the unsaved, unsound doctrine. And the personal example from each member of the Christian church on the island of Crete. They lived their doctrine and displayed the beauty of it in the life that was observed by those who saw them.

Then, we noticed too, that it is seen, this problem is seen in three different areas. One, in the area of the church itself, in the area of the home, and in the area of the community. And the letter itself naturally divides itself into those three parts: Chapter 1, there is the problem of the difficulty in the church. There is the difficulty of the problem in Chapter 2 in the home. There is also the difficulty of the problem in the community in Chapter 3. And so you have the church in Chapter 1, the home in Chapter 2 and the community in Chapter 3.

We are in Chapter 2. We started, we pushed the door open rather timidly, because when you begin to talk about home problems, you need courage as well as everything else. But here it is, it's right before us. You're not listening to me, you're listening to what the word of God says. And here it is, this word of God that is directed particularly to the problem that is seen in the home. And so that we may the scripture foundation for it, I want to read to you the first few verses of the second chapter of Paul's letter to Titus, and this is what it says. You will notice that first of all, the word goes to Titus himself. Then it moves from Titus to the older folks - the grandfather and grandmother. Then, it moves from grandfather and grandmother down to married daughter and married husband. And here _____. Then it goes back to Titus again. And then following that, you find that the final word of exhortation is the most difficult task, or group, those who are the slaves, those who are in bondage. And we find it moving like this, and you can follow it there, you'll see all of these in the few verses that I'm going to read to you.

Here's Titus: "But speak thou, the things which become sound doctrine. That the aged man may be sober, brave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded."¹

Now here we back again to Titus, "In all things showing thyself the pattern of good works in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned. That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you, exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters and to please them well in all things. Not answering again. Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."²

Our Father, let Thy blessing be upon Thy word. Whether anything else is worth listening to or not, this word is worthy of our closest attention. And we pray that the sound of it may fill our ears and illuminate our minds and give to us that impulse within our own worlds that will help us to walk in the light as Thou dost reveal it to us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

One of the things you notice right away as you study this chapter that has to do with home behavior - Christian behavior in the home. One of the things you notice at once is, it's everybody's business. It doesn't belong to just one class or one person. There is no one in the home who is excused. No one can say, "I'm not going to get involved in this." Not at all. This belongs to everybody. It's everybody's business, this business of Christian behavior within the home. And you see it there, right from the very beginning. You see the older folks and the younger folks. You see the fathers, and the mothers and the

¹ Titus 2: 1-6.

² Titus 2: 7-10

children. And you see male and female. And you see parent and child. And you see master and slave. And it's everybody's business, this matter of Christian behavior within the home.

It is remarkable that we should be considering a letter like this in these days. I wondered it isn't blazened abroad from one end of our land to the other, for if there is one thing that is distressing more than another, it is the breakdown of standards within the home. However much that may be responsible for the general mess in which this world seems to be, I do not know. But certainly it's one of the contributing factors, isn't it? And no wonder that we find here God's word thundering at us as we consider the breakdown of standards within the home. Home relationships have broken down. Home standards have gone. Home loyalties have gone. And one of the most distressing things that we see, we see the evidence of it everywhere, is the breakdown within the home.

And then we find this is not a new problem, not at all. This is something that existed right from the beginning of the Christian church. One of the very first things they have to face was the breakdown of relationships and behavior and standards within the Christian home. Because remember beloved, that every problem that ever exists within the church is first of all a home problem. It begins in the home, not in the church. We see it. It simply comes into the daylight. When we see the problems within the church, every last one of them are magnified home problems, illuminated home problems. Problems that now come into view, but they exist within the home.

And here is this letter that gives us instruction. Dares to say things to us that we would not dare to say to each other. I would not dare to say to you some of the things that I hear in this letter that have to be said apart from the fact that the word of God is underneath it and all we are doing is doing what God intended us to do and being faithful to the word.

And that's all. And here we find it. And there are two great remedies for it. One is sound doctrine. And the other is a sound example. What we believe and what we live. A belief that behaves is God's answer for the problem that may be in any home and the problem that may be in any church and in any community for that matter. And this is God's way of telling us about it. The sound doctrine.

By the way, did you notice that the word "sound" occurs three times in the words that I read to you? Did you notice that? We're talking about things occurring in series of threes this morning. We've seen several of them, here's another one. Did you notice this? That the word "sound" occurs, and remember, my dear, the word "sound" means exactly what it means when the doctor says it to you. When you go to the doctor and he puts his stethoscope there at your chest, and then gives you a pat on the back with one hand, gives you a bill for \$20 with the other and says, "There as sound as a dollar," although he doesn't say that these days, does he? Because a dollar isn't very sound, but there use to be a time when that was it. But it means exactly the same. It means healthful, wholesome, appropriate. That's what it means, "sound." And you will find three times, "sound doctrine," and "sound faith," and "sound words." And it's simple to see how they all fit together. We've said it over and over again here. When sound faith expresses itself, it speaks in sound words. And when sound words are arranged in proper order, they become sound doctrine. That's all sound doctrine is. It's simply the sound words arranged in proper order. And we've got the three again.

Now when we turn to the actual illustrations and exhortations of this letter, it begins in a rather unusual way and place for that matter. If there are problems that exist within the home, we don't usually attack them from the top. We usually go to the bottom. If the teenagers at the bottom or the young folks at the

bottom, I don't believe that at all. But that's usually where we start, isn't it? But it doesn't start here. As a matter of fact, the children are scarcely mentioned at all, only incidentally; scarcely mentioned at all, only in the fact that an elder ought to have children who have caught the loveliness of his wholesome life and are reflecting it in their own lives. Like the woman to whom 2nd John was written, whose children were just as fine away from home as they were at home, which is an interesting observation that John makes when he saw them.

And here it starts not with the young folks, but with the older folks. It starts with grandfather, and then goes to grandmother. And then goes from grandmother, down to the married daughter. And from the married daughter down to the married man and precious little is said about him, only just a few words. And then back to Titus himself. And then to the slaves. And here it starts with grandfather. If the problem is to be solved, let's start there. Let's start with grandfather, the aged man. Let's start there. For if there is one thing that is more pitiful than another in this matter of the breakdown of the family is to see it's not merely in the young folks, but in the older folks, as well. And if you have any doubt about that, you can go to Florida in the season, and go to the places that you're not suppose to go to. Go to the race track. Go to the dog track. Go to the Jai Alai frontons and see who's there. And you'll find grandmother, and grandfather, and grandmother there all the time, everywhere. And you'll find the frozen look on their faces, as they're seeking to satisfy themselves with the husk, the swine to eat. And you'll find the cold glare of greed in their eyes, in midst of all the gambling stuff that's there. And all you have to do is go on down there, and there it is wide open. Everybody can see it. There are exceptions of course. But you can see it there, the breakdown is pitiful.

Here is this word to grandfather, "Grandfather, watch your step. Grandfather, control your thinking," because that's what sober minded means. It means thinking under control. "Grandfather, what's your thinking," because if Satan is going to trap you, he'll start with your head, not with your feet. He'll start with your thinking. What's your thinking? Sober minded. Be grave. And that's nothing to do with a graveyard either. That's not a cemetery term. Not here, not at all. It simply means, be your age, grandfather. Act according to your age. Wear the garment of your maturity with pride and dignity.

Let me remind you that God gives garments to us all the way along, from beginning to the ending of life, God provides garments for us. But I'd like to remind you that the most beautiful garments God ever provides is not for the youngsters. You won't find it in the nursery, not at all. You'll find it when God gives the garment of maturity to somebody who is not young anymore. And one of the most pitiful things you can see is to find old folks who haven't got sense enough to wear the garment of maturity appropriately, who are spending their time trying to turn the clock back. And here's a word that comes to the older folks, "Grandfather, don't hate the adolescents, because if you do, the net results may be more hate than adolescent. And here is the word that comes to us, and out of the midst of your life, "Grandfather, the swell of faith must be seen coming like a crystal stream out of your life." You've got grandfathers like that, half your problem is solved, and the other half will be solved when you've got grandmothers who are likewise.

And here we are talking not merely to grandfathers, but we're talking to grandmothers as well. Out of the faith that's in their hearts, there will become love and patience. And most of our home problems have arisen because of the lack of either one or the other of those things, and maybe both - lack of love or lack of patience. Aged women - what does he say to these golden haired beautiful folks there who are so magnificent? These lovely folks, and when I talk in that manner, I'm talking about what God sees -

these magnificent women with the glory of their maturity upon them. These senior citizens in the family of God, that's what he's talking about - talking about the high dignity of it all. If ever a Christian has a right to pride at all, it is when either men or women wear the garment of their maturity and wear it appropriately. This is what the word is saying to us. Are we listening? Are we? "It doesn't apply to me." Yes it does, it applies to you the day after tomorrow. Sure it will. It may be a little late for you to go, but you're on the way brother, you sure are. You're on the way. You certainly are.

Reverent, not slanderers. Avoid excess. And then the biggest job of all is given to the grandmother. and this is only mentioned here. What is that big job that is given to grandmother – the women who God has been teaching lessons through time and other means. Great lessons have been sinking down into her heart. What's she going to do with it? She is to teach her married daughter the lessons that God has been teaching her. You pass it on to somebody else and remember, the somebody else is the one right under your own eyes. Don't try to be correcting other people's daughters until you've corrected your own – that's what the Word is saying. That's it. You grandmothers, teach those married girls of yours and when you do, you'll have precious little that you'll need to say to the husbands. And notice if you please, there is very little said to the husbands. Just one or two words and that's all. All the correcting, all the exhortation has been done. They won't need much correcting if they've got a wife like that. Here is the thought that's before us – and again, this is the book talking, it's not me. This is the book talking to us.

And then it moves out to Titus again and it says to Titus, "You are to be a pattern of good works," as if again, the spirit is saying, and Paul is saying to Titus, "Don't you talk to others until you know that the lesson has been wrought out in your own life. You be quite sure you learn the lesson first, Titus before you undertake to teach it to somebody else." And here's the thought that's based on a pattern of good works. A pattern?

A pattern my dear, is a teaching word. It's the word that is used when a teacher puts a word on the blackboard and gives the meaning of the word and then says to the members of his class, "I want you to write this word ten times on your worksheet and put the meaning of it." And here is the word. Here is the pattern of it. You write it on your worksheet. "Titus, you ought to be a pattern of good works, and remember, Titus, you are writing on the scroll of your life something that somebody is reading. Whether you like it or not, somebody reads what you write, and you'd better remember it, Brother Titus. You'd better remember it, and watch your step because somebody is reading the word you'll write."

One of our great poets, James Russell Lowell wrote these words, he said, "Life is a sheet of paper, white, upon which we each may write a word or two and then, the night." I wonder my dear, what kind of a word are you writing, because that's the implication of it. If it's simply something to somebody who lived long ago, then we've missed the point entirely. You're writing something, you've got the sheet of paper, white. And you are writing whether you like it or not, and somebody is looking at it. And the implication of it is, "You follow this. You write as I write." That's what mothers are saying to their children, "you write as I write." That's what they're saying to their fathers, "you write as I write." And here is the word that's before us.

And then he moves from there into the realm of the slave, where the most difficult people are told to do the most difficult thing – to adorn the doctrine. And this is the most difficult thing of all, not just to believe the doctrine, adorn it. There's a difference, you know. We can believe the doctrine without

adorning it. That's one of the difficulties about doctrine, so much of it isn't adorned at all. It means simply, make it beautiful. Make it acceptable. Make it lovely. Not just correct.

There are a lot of correct Christians who are not lovely at all. Just lots of them. But he wants us to adorn the doctrine. It's easy enough isn't it, to say how a doctrine can be adorned? The Word of God tells us exactly what it means to adorn the doctrine. Take for instance the doctrine of giving, the doctrine that we don't know very much about unfortunately. One of the things we need to do is to get down on our knees and ask God to show us the real meaning of the doctrine of giving. We don't know much about it. But you know how we're told to give. We can give grudgingly, of necessity or hilariously. Tell me, which method adorns the doctrine? Which method? Which adorns the doctrine? Grudgingly? Of necessity? Or, cheerfully? The amount you give remains the same, but I'm deeply convinced that God can do a lot more with a \$5 bill that is given hilariously than he can with the stuff that's given grudgingly. I wonder he doesn't drop it into the waste paper basket somewhere or other. The doctrine of giving.

We can soon find out just what it means to adorn a doctrine. God is in the adorning business. We ought to know that as we look around on a morning like this, God is adorning everything. He hasn't enlarged it at all, hasn't added to it, he just made it beautiful, that's all. And everywhere you go you can see it.

Go to Holland, Michigan³ along about this time, you'll see God in the adorning business. Go to Mobile, Alabama and go to the Bellingrath Gardens⁴ and see the azaleas, and if you haven't seen them, you haven't seen anything hardly in the way of glorious beauty. See God adorning the azaleas down there. Go to Atlanta and see the dogwoods. Go to Washington and see the cherry blossoms. Why? God's in the adorning business. Sure. Of course he is. Of course he is. Of course he is. I watched God adorn Lake Huron a few days ago with the glory of fiery million colors of a sunset, and it was magnificent. God's in the adorning business. Sure he is. Sure he is. He certainly is, and he wants our lives not merely to be correct, but beautiful.

And he's saying to these folks here, that's one of the reasons why you've got trouble there is because your lives haven't reflected something of the beauty and loveliness that God splashes everywhere. The beauty of it. We've got lots of it in this room this morning – the unearthly beauty of the mothers that are with us. We don't have to look far, do we to find God in the adorning business. These magnificent women who are here in this room this morning. We don't have to look very far.

I wrote a song years ago around the story of the calling of the fisherman, in the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark.⁵ I set it to, I made a song out of it and thousands of people have been singing it and a good many of them have been influenced to Christ and for Christ because of it. I could tell you a lot of

³ Holland, Michigan is located on the shores of Lake Michigan on the western side of the Lower Peninsula along the shores of the Macatawa River. It was principally settled by the Dutch in the mid 19th century and has retained much of its Dutch cultural roots. It is a beautiful area also known as the City of Churches, where there are 170 churches, primarily of the Reformed Church in America denomination.

⁴ Founded by Walter Bellingrath in the early part of the 20th century. Bellingrath was one of the early Coca-Cola distributors in the Mobile, Alabama area. He became a significant industrialist and businessman. His wife, Bessie Mae Morse devoted her life to the development of the gardens. She died in 1943 at age 65. Walter then devoted his remaining life to the completion of her dream. He ultimately died in 1955 at age 83. Bellingrath Gardens remains open to the public and is a significant attraction in the Mobile area.

⁵ He is referring here to his well-known song, *Follow Thou Me*, written in 1929.

stories about that song. It was a song that would have fitted in quite well last Friday night on this thought of following. But I wrote the song, and in the beginning of it, the words were these:

By the peaceful shores of Galilee,
Mending their nets by the silver sea.

And two girls used to sing that 50 odd years ago, one of them is in heaven, the other one is a retired, mature woman living in Vancouver.⁶ And to my astonishment, I received a letter from her a little while ago and she told me this, she said, “You know, I’ve sung your song over and over again, and I never quite understood what you meant by ‘mending their nets by The Silvery Sea……”

Unfortunately, the tape abruptly ends at this point.

⁶ He is almost assuredly referring to his beloved wife, Violet who died in 1967. Violet was a lovely vocalist in her early adult life. As this series of Bible lessons was delivered to the Grace Bible Church in Detroit, this reference would help further date these lessons to the period 1967 – 1972, at which point, Sidney Cox moved to Birmingham, Alabama.