

# The Message of 2 Timothy

by G. Campbell Morgan

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*The letter to Timothy emphasizes the importance of the Christian minister being equipped with gifts and grace, using prevailing methods of construction and character, and fulfilling his supreme work of preaching and teaching the Word.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:16, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 2 Timothy 1:12, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:5, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 4:10

**Topics:** "Faithfulness in Service", "Ministry"

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## Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the essential qualities of a true minister of Jesus Christ in his sermon on 2 Timothy, focusing on the importance of perfect equipment through gifts and grace, prevailing methods of construction and character, and the supreme work of knowing and preaching the Word. He highlights the urgent call to 'fulfill thy ministry' amidst the perils threatening the church, urging ministers to stir up their gifts and be strengthened in grace. Morgan stresses the significance of the ministry of the Word as a corrective to the challenges faced by the church and the necessity for the church to recognize and support those called to ministry.

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## Transcript

### A. THE PERMANENT VALUES

#### I. The Central Teaching

The true Minister of Jesus Christ.

#### i. His perfect Equipment.

Gifts and Grace.

#### ii. His prevailing Methods.

Construction.

Character.

#### iii. His supreme Work.

Know the Writings.

Preach the Word.

II. The Abiding Appeal

"Fulfill thy Ministry." iv. 5.

i. As to Equipment.

a. Gift.

"Stir up the Gift."

b. Grace.

"Be Strengthened in the Grace."

ii As to Methods.

a. Construction.

"Give diligence . . ."

b. Character.

"Flee . . . follow."

iii. As to Work.

a. The Writings.

"Abide."

b. The Preaching.

"Instant."

**B. THE LIVING MESSAGE**

I. To the Church

i. The Preaching of the Word as the Corrective to abounding Perils.

ii. The Importance of the Ministry.

iii. Recognition.

Of Gift and Grace in choosing.

Of Time and Teaching in work.

II. To the Minister

- i. The Safety of the Deposit.
- ii. The Trusteeship of the Deposit.
- iii. The Fidelity to the Deposit.

Because of

Christ's Appearing.

Formalism.

Paul's Departure.

In our consideration of this letter, in order to discover its main teaching, the central teaching of the first letter is assumed. That letter teaches us that the true function of the Christian Church is the proclamation of the Truth in the world, and that the true function of the Christian minister is that of the exposition of the Truth in the Church.

Between the writing of the first letter and this one, some period had elapsed. Paul, who was in prison when he wrote the great epistles, had been liberated when he wrote the first letter to Timothy; but was again in prison before he wrote this second one; and there is practically no question that this is the last writing that ever came from his pen.

The reason of the writing of this second letter to Timothy was that of the perils threatening the church, which were likely to prevent the church fulfilling its function as the pillar and ground of the truth. These perils he described in the words:

"Know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof."

That is a picture of what the apostle saw happening in the Church; it was being invaded by godlessness and worldliness. The Church is the pillar and ground of the Truth, and if the Church fails, then the Truth ceases to be proclaimed to the world; and that was the reason of the writing of this letter. The great missionary heart of Paul was troubled about the Church, because where the Church fails to give its testimony, the city abides in darkness. In view of these perils he wrote to Timothy, upon whom there necessarily rested grave responsibility.

The purpose of the letter then was that of preparing Timothy for the fulfillment of his responsibility for the Church, in order to the maintenance of its testimony; and therefore it is preeminently a letter to those who are in the ministry of the Word.

The central teaching of this letter is that of its revelation of the true minister of Jesus Christ. The content is the message. The order is so systematic, the movement is so regular, the method is so logical, that any young man preparing for the ministry, or any man in the ministry, may read it as a letter to himself from this great apostle, and from God Himself by the Spirit through the apostle.

The letter gives us a perfect picture of the true minister of Jesus Christ, and that in three respects; those namely of his perfect equipment; of his prevailing methods; and of his supreme work.

The perfect equipment of the Christian minister is revealed in two words, gifts and grace. In the old days when a candidate presented himself for the work of the ministry, the questions asked were: Has this young man gifts, and has he grace? I am not sure that we always ask those questions to-day. Yet these are the supreme qualifications; and no man can be a true minister of the Word in the Church, and no church can call a man to be a minister, and no college can make a man a minister if he lack these.

A man can become a minister of the Word only when a gift is bestowed upon him by the Head of the Church through the Holy Spirit. That is the supreme qualification. Roman Catholics speak of a vocation; it is a great word. The vocation, according to the New Testament is received with the bestowment of the gift. The gift bestowed is the first qualification for the Christian ministry.

But grace also is necessary, with all that word means, of fellowship with Christ and with God, and the consequent approximation to the character of Christ and of God; the appropriation of the very resources of Christ and of God, and these so reacting upon the character as to make it the character of light and life and love.

The gifts are described in the Ephesian letter:

"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

The gift of the apostle is that of the first messenger, the pioneer, the missionary. The gift of the prophet is that of the ability to discover what the Word of God has to say, not so much to the individual as to the nation, the age. The gift of the evangelist enables a man to tell the story of Jesus with such wooing winsomeness that men are drawn towards Him, and are won for the Kingdom and the Church. The gift of the pastor and teacher enables a man to watch the flock and to feed them. A gift is in itself a Divine deposit, flaming in fire, burning in heat, driving in energy; that is the first thing.

Beyond this there must be grace, that infinite resource of God at our disposal through Christ, which creates the tone of our preaching and the temper of our living, bringing all into harmony with the character of God.

The prevailing methods of the true Christian minister are those of construction and character. He is to aim at the development in holiness of those to whom he ministers; and this by the guarding of his own character, so that it may express concretely the truth he preaches. These are the true methods. As to constructive work, he builds upon foundations, and watching the building, patiently corrects it where it is faulty, testing it ever by the Word.

"Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction." The whole idea of that passage is that of character building. The first word refers to authoritative teaching, upon which a man can depend, upon which he can build. Reproof does not mean rebuke, it 'means proof over. again. The Greek word is figurative and suggests the letting down of a plumb-line by the side of a building to test its straightness. Correction means pulling the thing that is out of line into the straight. Instruction means construction, that is carrying the building higher. That is the work of the Christian minister. All the gifts of the ministry of the Word tend to the building of character according to the will of

God.

The supreme work of the Christian minister is twofold; first to know the writings; and then to preach and teach the Word. No man can exercise the Christian ministry, whatever be the nature of his gift, who does not abide in the Scriptures. His business is to preach the Word, not to destroy it, not to defend it, but to preach it.

The abiding appeal of this letter to the Christian minister is contained in the charge of the apostle, "Fulfill thy ministry." This is necessary as to equipment, methods, and work.

As to equipment, the first responsibility concerns the gift; and is declared in the words, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee." To stir up is to set on fire, to fan to a flame. The gift received for the ministry is a thing of fire; we are to fan it to a flame; and not allow it to burn to an ember. Are we not all in danger of allowing the fire to die down? There is nothing the Christian minister has to guard against more earnestly than the danger that he should come to the hour when the Word of God ceases to move him. It is a subtle danger. We are always handling the Word, reading it, studying it; and unless we are careful, it will cease to surprise us, cease to amaze us; and the gift, whether of apostle, prophet, evangelist, or pastor, will become dull and dead.

The second responsibility as to equipment concerns the grace, and is revealed in the words: "Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." We must not neglect the means of grace, in the true full sense of the word. Let no minister imagine that he of all men can afford to neglect prayer and devotional study of his Bible, and that fellowship with God which, being neglected, the fire always burns dimly, the pulse beats slowly, and the Christian life is poorer than it ought to be. "Be strengthened in the grace." "Fulfill thy ministry."

As to methods, our responsibility for construction is declared in the simple and yet incisive charge, "Give diligence" ; while our responsibility as to our own character, if we are to construct character in others, is declared in the words; "Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace . . . foolish and ignorant questionings refuse." "Fulfill thy ministry."

As to work, we fulfill our responsibility as to the Scriptures when we abide in them; and as to the Church, by being instant in season and out of season.

All this is but the gathering out of sentences, the whole teaching of the letter being in mind. These are the revelations of the secrets of success in the Christian ministry.

This letter emphasizes the fact that the teaching of the Word is the corrective of all the perils that threaten the Church ; just as the preaching of the Word, and the Word incarnate in the lives of the saints who constitute the Church, is the corrective of all the perils that threaten the city and the nation. In proportion as we really know this Word of God, all the things which sap the life of the Church and make her devoid of power are corrected. The Church must flourish by the preaching of the Word. Nothing will take its place. Whether it be a church, or an organization taking the name and responsibility of Christian work in the world, if it neglect the Word, it robs itself of power, and sooner or later the whole must crumble to pieces. The churches that have placed the preaching of the Word at the centre of their life, and have aimed at its embodiment in the lives of their members, are the churches which have truly served their day and generation.

Consequently the Church must recognize the importance of the ministry of the Word. I think a grave peril threatening us to-day is that the churches take so little interest in the men who go to our colleges. I think the hour must come when the colleges will have to say, We will accept no man for training unless he not only brings his minister's recommendation, but one also from a church which knows that he possesses a gift for the work of preaching. We take men too often before we are sure that they have the gift. We give such men training, and then are surprised that no church wants them. Let the Church take over this responsibility and understand how important and sacred a thing this ministry of the Word is. The Church should be able to say: We recognize this man has gift and grace, and because he has gift and grace he is called to the ministry; therefore we will see to it that he has time for preparation and training, in order that his gift may be realized and his ministry fulfilled.

The first note of application to the minister is one of comfort if he be indeed a minister of Jesus Christ. If he have the gift and grace, then this letter brings him comfort, and it is comfort coming from the testimony of a man whose ministry of the Word was closing. This man, anxious about Timothy, and anxious that the Church should fulfill its function, anxious therefore that this young minister should be able to fulfill his function in order that the Church might fulfill her function in the world, said: "I know Him Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit." That phrase, "my deposit," may mean something deposited with Him, or something deposited with me. The popular interpretation has been that He is able to take care of something we have given over to Him. I think the apostle meant that the Lord is able to take care of a deposit which He commits to us, the deposit of Truth. If I have gift and grace, I need waste no time guarding the truth or defending it. I am sorry for the man who thinks his business is to go about defending the Truth. The Lord is able to take care of that. The safety of the deposit is the fundamental word of comfort to the man who wants to preach the Word of God.

The responsibility of the minister is that of the trusteeship of the Word of God. I hold the Word of God as a trustee; it is mine for others. If I am called into this ministry and am given a gift, the gift means power to convey; that is the peculiar quality that makes a man a minister. Consequently the Truth is a deposit which He is able to guard and of which I become the trustee. I am in debt to other men for all I know of the Truth, and I cannot get out of debt so long as there remains one single sphere of my influence, in which that has not been heard which has been entrusted to me.

The final application of this letter to the minister is that it calls him to fidelity to the trusteeship of the deposit, fidelity to the exercise of the gift in order that the Truth may be known to other men ; fidelity because of Christ's appearing presently; because of the formalism that is growing within the Church ; and because gaps in the ranks are always occurring.

The appeal is a constant appeal. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers fulfill their ministry and pass on; but the Word abides, and the responsibility of those who follow in their train abides. When next we hear of some labourer fallen in the forefront, some teacher of the Word, let us say: So help us God, a little more faithfulness, a little more of passion, a little more of suffering, a little more of outpoured life, and the victory will be won.

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