

2 Timothy - Part 1

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald's sermon on 2 Timothy emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine, the role of every believer in ministry, and a critique of the clerical system in the church.

Duration: 43:16

Scripture: Matthew 6:19

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being called by God and having confidence in His provision. He encourages listeners to trust that God will provide for their needs as they step into full-time service for Him. The speaker also highlights the role of the church in supporting those called to ministry. He shares testimonies of individuals who have experienced God's faithfulness in providing for their needs without relying on traditional means of support. The sermon concludes with a reminder to hold fast to the teachings of the Bible and to rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and preservation.

Transcript

For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, nor of me, who hath saved us, and called us to the holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but hath now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day.

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Lest you know that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes, the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains.

But when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day. You know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus." 2 Timothy is a manual for service of the Lord in the last days, and that's why it is spiked with urgent warning, and with picado counsel, and yet with much human warmth and affection for Timothy.

I think you know that in Paul's first letters you have evil in incipient form, and in the second epistle it is holy revelation. In the one it's in seed, and in the second it's in flower. That's what you have here in second Timothy, not in embryo, but now really developed.

This letter was written from prison, but wonderfully enough there's no smell of a prison about it. But I think that's real triumph in Christ that a man can do this. It's written at the close of Paul's life, but there's no moaning and groaning at the bar that he put out to see.

Actually, what you find in this letter is a burning desire in Paul's heart to pass the plaguing force on to Timothy, and to see the work continue. Paul could adopt the words of legend. He wrote from Bedford jail, this prison very each to me has been, since I came here, and so it also hanging be, without it's been appeared.

This prison very each to me has been, since I've been here, and so it also hanging be, without it's been appeared. I often think of that sometimes, the occurrence of the Lord's eyes, violent death, and we think of fear, and we think of bullets, and we think of rocks, but if the Lord Jesus appeared in that moment, a few rocks wouldn't make any difference to a tripper, and neither would fear, or anything else that might be hurtful. In this epistle, we see Paul as a man of deep conviction.

He wasn't a man who could be put it around. He wasn't a man who was mealy-mouthed. He was a man of deep conviction based upon the word of God.

He never used weevil words. He never spoke out of both corners of his mouth at the same time. He was outspoken, he was bold, and he was to the point, and I want to tell you, we need men like him today.

Not compromisers, not men-cheaters, or masters of exegetical evasion. Whatever else you want to say about Paul, you can't say he was devious, or that he engaged in double-crossing. He was not like some of the gutless wonders of this decade, the 20th century.

He was a no-nonsense creature, fool like Martin Luther, whose conscience was captive to the word of God. That's what Luther said. May God raise up many more like him.

Obviously, Paul was willing to confront when it was necessary. I'm always fascinated by the the way he names names in the epistles. Hmm? Figellus, Hermodity, Alexander did me much evil, and so forth.

He didn't hesitate to mention names when the truth of God, and the work of God, was at stake. Sometimes he mentioned the names of those who were heretics and apostates, other times he mentioned the names of those who were loyal to the Lord, and loyal to him. Honest Piferous being an example of that.

He didn't always speak in softest whispers, or in tenderest tones, as one of our hymns tells the Lord to do. I like the fact that he was a man of deep conviction. He could say with a sonnet, I believe, therefore have I spoken.

Not, I speculate it, therefore have I spoken. Or, I guess, therefore have I spoken. He didn't speak from doubt or speculation, but from a blood-earned conviction of the truth of the word of God.

Unlike many modern theologians today, he didn't talk about subjects like the likelihood of God, or respect for Jesus, or current theological trends on the continent. He thundered out the great verities of God's precious word, and yet at the same time he was a man of extreme tenderness, especially here in his

dealing with Timothy. Sometimes we think of Paul as being rather austere and distant, but I certainly don't get that when I read 2 Timothy.

He wasn't like some of the brothers of a previous generation who felt especially called to put down some of the younger brothers. When Leek Samuel went to a conference in England years ago, there was an older brother who went up to him and said, young man, which would you rather, look like a bigger fool than you are, or be a bigger fool than you look? And Leek Samuel said, well, here's where a little humility comes in. He said to himself, and he says, I'd rather look like a bigger fool than I am.

And the younger brother laid his hands on his shoulders and said, my dear chap, it's quite impossible. And so, so Leek thought, what's the whole thing? I had answered it the other way. And the reply was insane.

My dear chap, it's quite impossible. Well, Paul wasn't like that. He was tender in his dealing with Timothy.

He begins his epistle, Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ. That's interesting, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Why did he mention that? Because really, in this epistle anyway, his apostleship wasn't being questioned as it was initially.

Timothy had no doubt about Paul's divine call. Why was Paul saying this? Was this just a prideful assertion? No, I think that when Paul said this, Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, he said it with a sense of holy awe. He never got over the wonder of his calling, especially commissioned by the Lord of Might and Glory to go forth with a message of redeeming grace.

Underneath whom the less than the least of all things is its grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, Paul never got over the fact that he, an arch-persecutor of the church, would receive the divine cap on his shoulder, and be sent forth as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I hope we all share that tonight. What is more wonderful than to be in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? That's living, and we should have that sense of holy awe and deep amazement when we think that he would ever leave us with the message.

If you go to some commentary, they might even suggest that Paul was the first pastor, uh, the first prelate of the church in Ephesus. This is quite common, and I want to just think with you about that for a little while tonight. Maybe I'll just take the text and depart from it, but I hope to come back again.

It's interesting how many in the clerical system can read a verse like that and bring the clerical system into it, but there's nothing of officialism here at all. But, because of centuries of tradition revolving around the clerical system, it's hard to believe that the idea of one man officiating in a church doing most, if not all, of the preaching is not the New Testament practice. Yet, the whole idea of dividing an equal brotherhood into clergy and laity is totally foreign to the New Testament.

There's no biblical warrant, for instance, for our believers to speak of my pastor or for any minister to speak of my congregation. You just don't find language like that in the scriptures. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any mention of such a thing as a one-man minister.

In Philippians chapter 1, you have the composition of a New Testament church where Paul writes to the saints with their bishops. Paul was courteous. As a prelate, as a clergyman in the church in Philippi, he would have had the grace to mention him.

And some men, some writers who themselves were clergymen, have had the grace to admit that. Let me read you from Albert Barnes, Barnes's commentary, and here he's commenting on 1 Timothy chapter 3. He said, There's no allusion to anyone who was to be superior to the bishops and deacons. As the apostle Paul was expressly giving instructions in regard to the... If he supposed... Was he to have nothing to do in transmitting the office to others? Were there no peculiar qualifications required in such an order of men which it would be proper to mention? Would it not be respectful at least in Paul to have made some allusion to such an office if Timothy himself held it? Of course, the answer is yes.

Paul, being a gentleman, would have mentioned it, but he didn't. He said to the saints with the bishops and deacons. I think you see Paul's role as an apostle of Jesus Christ in Ephesians chapter 4, where he says that the gifts were given for the purpose of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ.

Paul was an itinerant, evangelist, assembly planter. The longest he ever stayed in one place was two years in Ephesians. He stayed a total of three years throughout his ministry.

At one time, the longest he ever stayed was two years. Paul was a goer, not a stayer. Paul was not a resident pastor abroad.

He went, preached the gospel, saw the old sages, taught them the word of God, saw them engaged in the work of the ministry, and then he moved on. His purpose was to see them matured as servants of the Lord, and as soon as they were able to carry on by themselves, he moved on. He considered himself extendable.

It seems to me that's the pattern you find in the New Testament scriptures. People say, well, Timothy and Titus, they were resident pastors. No, they weren't.

Timothy and Titus were itinerant troubleshooters working with the Apostle Paul in his ministry. Some seek to base the idea of clergymen on the role of bishops in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, but it should be noticed that, of course, as you know, the bishops are always spoken of in the plural. To build an assembly around one man is totally foreign to the spirit of the scriptures.

Unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst. To me, that's one of the precious truths of the New Testament church.

Christ is the gathering center, not a man. And where you have a group of believers who deem that truth, and who meet to Christ as their center, you have a stability and a spirituality that is difficult to find anywhere else. Now, I'd like to call some men to the witness stand tonight who will confirm what we've been saying.

I'm not going to call J. N. Darby. Rest in peace, dear brother Darby. I'm not going to call William Kelly.

I'll just let him sit and hear his teachings be confirmed. I'm not going to call Macintosh or any of this. I'm going to call some clergymen to the witness stand tonight.

Some men who themselves held the office of a one-man ministry. And you'll be interested to hear what they've said. Let's begin with Alexander McLaren, who himself was no mean preacher of the word of God.

He says, I cannot but believe that the present practice of confining the public teaching of the church to an official class has done harm. Why should one man be forever speaking, and hundreds of people who are able to keep sitting dumb to listen, or pretend to listen to him? He says, I hate forcible revolution, and do not believe that any institutions, either political or ecclesiastical, which need violence to sweep them away, are ready to be removed. But I believe that if the level of spiritual life were raised among us, new forms would naturally be evolved in which the great spirit of Christianity is founded.

Namely, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my spirit a dayful process. Now, maybe you're not so familiar with Alexander McLaren, but I could also mention J.I. Packer, whose books are widely read today. This is what he says, "...By sphericalism I mean that combination of conspiracy and tyranny in which the minister claims, and the congregation agrees, that all spiritual ministry is his responsibility and not theirs.

A notion that is both disreputable in principle, and spirit-quenching in practice." J.I. Packer. You're still not convinced? This is John Scott. Please take this in.

In his book, *God's New Society*, John R.W. Scott asks, What model of the church, then, should we keep in our minds? The traditional model is that of the pyramid, with the pastor perched precariously on the pinnacle like a little pope in his own church. Do you like alliteration, good fellow? Perched, pastor perched precariously on the pinnacle like a little pope in his own church, while the laity are arrayed below him in staring ranks of inferiority. It's a totally unbiblical image, because the New Testament envisages not a single pastor with a docile flock, but both a plural oversight and an every-member ministry.

Donald Gray Barnhouse. Many of you, I'm sure, have heard him, and many of you have read his book, and his message is still on the radio. Former pastor of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

He said, By the close of the first century, there was a party within the church organization which had gained a victory over the laity by exalting itself to a place of dominance, even though Peter had warned against it. As seen in the letter to the church at Ephesus, in the second chapter of the book of Revelation, there was in the first century a party called the Nicolaitans, who, as their name in Greek indicates, had gained supremacy over the laity. There it is stated that God Almighty hates the work of those who advocate and enforce rules over others, within the body of Christ.

Natan Ford, in his book called *The Christian Persuader*, says this, Our whole vocabulary of church activity will change if we really begin to take seriously the New Testament pattern. As Richard Halverson has said, When we ask, How many ministers has your church? The traditional answer is one, two, five, depending on how much of a paid staff you have. The true answer is two hundred or two thousand, depending on how large the membership is.

Every believer is a minister. A church which bottlenecks its outreach by depending on its specialists, its pastors or evangelists, to do it witness is living in violation of both the intention of its heads and the consistent pattern of the early Christians. East Stanley Jones, Methodist clergyman and missionary in India, he was outspoken along the same lines.

He says, The church at Antioch was founded by laymen, carried on by laymen, and spread through that ancient world by laymen. That's important for the reconstruction of the church today. The next great spiritual awakening is going to come through the laity.

Hitherto, the center of gravity has been on the minister. Now, the center of gravity has to be shifted to the laity. We ministers, missionaries and evangelists are never going to win the world.

We're too few to do it, and if we could do it, it wouldn't be good, for it would take away from the laity that spiritual growth and development which comes through sharing one's faith. But, we will never get the laity to take the responsibility for the Christian movement and its spread by saying, come on and help the pastor. Their inner response and sometimes outer response is, why should we? That's his job, we pay him for that.

But, that's true. That is actually true. He says, The very setup of the church tends to produce the anonymous.

The congregation is supposed to be silent and receptive, and the pastor is supposed to be outgoing and aggressive. That produces by its very makeup the spectator and the participant. By its very makeup, it produces the recessive, the ingrown, the non-contributive, and the parasite.

Men and women who, during the week, are molders of opinions, directors of large concurrences, directors of destinies, are expected to be petty on Sundays, and are supposed to love it. They have little responsibility, hence make little response except perhaps, I enjoyed your sermon. They have little to do, hence they do little.

He goes on to say, The laity and the whole have been in the stands as spectators, and the clergymen have been on the field playing the game. If the clergymen kick the goal or make the touchdown, he's applauded. Good pastor, hope he will stay.

That setup must be changed. The laity must come out of the stands as spectators and take the field as players, and the clergymen must come out of the field as players and take the sidelines as coaches of the team. The clergymen must be the guides, simulators, and spiritualizers of an essentially lay movement.

Downgrading them? No, upgrading them, for it's better to be a coach than to be a player. It's better to get ten people to work than to do ten men's work. You'll notice that many of these men keep talking about clergy and laity and other unscriptural firms, but at least give them credit for seeing beyond the facade of it all and getting down to brass tacks, the weakness of the clerical system.

A man named Brian Green said, The future of Christianity and evangelization of the world rests in the hands of ordinary men and women, and not primarily in those of professional Christian ministers. Harnack claimed that when the church won its greatest victories in the early days of the Roman Empire, it did so not by preachers, or teachers, or apostles, but by informal missionaries. And, looking back to the Apostolic Age, Benning J. H. Stewart reminds us that each member of the local assembly went out to win souls for Christ by personal contact, and then brought these newborn babes back into these local churches where they were indoctrinated and strengthened in the faith of the Redeemer.

They, in turn, went out to do likewise. And, in another place, Stewart says boldly that the world will never be evangelized in the way God intended, as long as there's a clerical system. Now, some of you are thinking, why is MacDonald taking all that time to labor the point? The reason is this, that at a time when many evangelical Christians seem to be moving away from the clerical system, we find many today in assemblies which have only bishops and deacons moving toward clarity, hiring men to be their full-time preachers, and to perform their religious function for them.

And, I would suggest to you tonight, these people are buying high and selling low, which isn't a very good practice. Buying high and selling low. Their cry is, give us a minister like the other churches.

They're like people in the social sciences who adopt popular trends of thought at the time when secular professionals are beginning to subject those trends to serious criticism. What I'm saying is that a lot of people we know are hurrying to get on the bandwagon at a time when perhaps the bandwagon is slowing down. I think it's something for us to think about.

Now, I said something a minute ago, hiring one man to perform their religious functions for them, and that brings me to another subject that I'd like to just mention, too, in this regard, because the two often go together. I might phrase the question this way. If not a salaried ministry, what then? Because they seem to go together very much the one-man ministry and a salaried ministry.

I would just say this. While a salary generally is a very suitable method of payment in most professions, it has very serious dangers connected with it, in connection with men who are handling the word of God. I was thinking when Brother Gooding was speaking this afternoon about Judas.

That terrible defection took place in connection with a man who was handling the money. Sometimes I wish the dollar could be removed from all Christian work. I do, really.

If that could happen, what would still go on tomorrow would be of God. So, the idea of a salaried ministry is completely foreign to the New Testament. I know the Lord thought definitely that the labor is worthy of his hire, and Paul confirmed that great truth.

He said that those who preach the gospel should live off the gospel. I know that's true, but I don't see anything in the New Testament that suggests that any Christian worker should receive that stipulated amount every month. One of the great problems, I'm going to list several of the great problems connected, one of the great problems is that those who control the salary might try to control the ministry, too.

When we were in Oak Park years ago, a man, a minister of the Baptist Church, he said to us, he said, I could preach the gospel the way you brothers do, but my people wouldn't have it. He said, I could preach the gospel the way you brothers do, but my people wouldn't have it. Now, I know it does not always happen that those who pay the piper want to call the tune.

I know that's true, but it has happened, it is happening, and it can happen. Now, that's a sad thing, because those who hold the purse string might be as carnal as the ghost, and yet they can try to suppress any preaching that does not suit them. It's also true that those who pay the salary can require some very artificial and unspiritual measures of achievement.

For instance, they can say that they want so many people to be added to the church role every year, either by professions of faith or by transfers of church, and this puts the poor man under tremendous pressure, and under that pressure it's very easy for him to soften the message, and to encourage well, he wouldn't say professions, but easy professions anyway, that would look good in an annual report, and also go very light on discipline. Don't you think that that's why there's very little discipline in evangelical churches today? Because there's such a tremendous emphasis on numbers, where the success of a church is measured by numbers. I was interested to read of a speech that Charles Poulson gave at the National Association of Evangelicals recently, their annual convention, and he spoke about this, about church growth, with the emphasis on measuring success by numbers, and the word he used to describe it was

abomination.

He said it's an abomination. God does not measure success by numbers, but by faithfulness, and he urged those men to go out and be faithful to the word of God, and to preach the word of God without compromise, and without watering it down. It's not in the preacher's power to produce true conversions, is it? God gives the increase, and what a cruel thing to put a man under that subtle sort of pressure, and then of course there's a terrible temptation for a man in that position to soft-peddle the message that might not go over well with his particular parishioners.

And he says, if he has a wealthy congregation, it might be very hard for him to get up and preach on Matthew 6.19, "...lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Be hard for him to get up and preach on 1 Timothy 6.17, "...command them that are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives richly all things for joy." What am I saying? I'm saying the preacher must be the Lord's free man, free to declare all the counsels of God, free to be the motif of God, free to speak of the oracles of God. Anything that hinders this is a great tragedy in the work of the Lord.

And thus, in times of declensions and apostasy, there's a tendency for people in this kind of a setup to take sides with wherever the money is. There's a very well-known denomination today that is being riddled with some modernism, I would say with apostasy, and there's a joke that goes around at every annual convention that they have. They call it a perennial joke, which pastors tell at each annual meeting, and they say that if the convention splits, I'm going with the annuity board.

They know which side their bread is buttered on financially, and they want that annuity for security in their old age. Financial considerations have a very terrible way of taking precedence over loyalty to the word of God, and of course a fixed salary could often, and I'm afraid does, weaken the light of faith. The servant of the Lord should be an example to others of one who walks by faith and not by sight, whose life is a perpetual crisis of dependence upon the living God, that's what we're supposed to be.

It's supposed to be men and women whose lives are perpetual crises of dependence upon the living God. G. H. Lange says, I have lived and worked in happy fellowship with workers in the gospel in many lands through 50 years, and am satisfied that a guaranteed or regular income, because it dispenses with direct and constant faith in God as to temporal supply, is certainly a spiritual loss, not by any means a gain. And then it's also possible in the ecclesiastical world, and not uncommon for men to shop around for bigger salaries, and it's very hard, well I would say very easy to confuse the guidance of God with a better salary, isn't it? Very easy to confuse those two, and to conclude that the offering of attractive salary is an indication of God's call.

I'm often reminded that in Old Testament economy, a bond servant was worth twice a hired servant. It's interesting, isn't it? Deuteronomy 15 verse 18. In other words, one who served because he belonged to his master, and loved his master, was far more productive and valuable than one who worked for what he got out of it.

I wonder if this has a message for us today. Well, somebody might say, well if not a fixed salary, what is the way? How is the servant of the Lord to be supported? I would suggest just a few things. First of all, and I think this is tremendously important, the servant of the Lord must have absolute confidence that God has called him into the work.

There must be not a shadow of doubt in his mind that this is the case. The call must be so clear that to refuse would be positive disobedience, and he must not only be sure himself, but he must have the confidence of his elders in an attitude. In other words, he should be able to go to the elders and present his call in such a way to them that there's not a shadow of doubt in their minds either that the Spirit of God is trusting this person for it, because no man is a judge of his own gift, and it's good to have the counsel and confirmation of the elders in him.

That's basic. In the life of faith, you must be sure that God is calling. Secondly, he must have this confidence that, as Hudson Taylor has said, the Lord pays for what he orders, and if God calls me to full-time service for him, I can be absolutely assured that God is going to pay for it, and I can step forth without any visible means of support.

Just knowing that God is going to be with me, I must have unwavering trust that he will provide for my needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and that should be enough. According to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. How will God do this? Well, of course, he'll do it through his people, won't he? He'll do it through his people.

Edith Shaffer was writing about the work at LaBrie Fellowship, and it was a work of faith, and she wrote this. She said, God can place an idea in a person's mind. He can cause someone to feel a strong urge or conviction to do something.

So, when we pray for a certain amount of money, God can cause one person to reach for his checkbook and send that amount, or he can cause a dozen people to send odd fractions of that amount, causing the total to be exact. And you know that's true. You've had that happen.

Let me read that again. So, when we pray for a certain amount of money, God can cause one person to reach for his checkbook and send that amount, or he can cause a dozen persons to send odd fractions of that amount, causing the total to be exact. You may not believe that he does this, but I'm simply saying that when I talk about praying for money, this is what I mean.

And to me, this is the thrilling part of the life of faith, to see income increase as needs decrease, and see income decrease when the needs aren't there. Marvelous, really. What could be more wonderful than that? And besides, it's a marvelous system of checks and balances.

It keeps me from doing work for God that might not be the will of God. I think it's very, very important. If I'm serving according to my own wisdom, I can't expect him to provide for it.

Ray Williams wrote in Echoes Magazine, I believe this is the way. If not, how could we rely on his guidance? If I say to myself, I want to do this, and say to my friends, can you provide the money to help me to do this job? I might want to do it, and my friends might want to help me, but I would not know if it was the Lord's will. If I only tell the Lord that I want to do this thing, and the finance to do it appears without anyone but the Lord knowing about it, then I know it's the Lord's will for me.

Now, don't go down and try to explain this life of faith to your banker tomorrow. He'll call the psychiatric clinic, but it works. That's the wonderful part about it.

Listen to the testimony of Silas Fox. He said in 1926, feeling that it would be better for me to look directly to the Lord for support, and be more free to take the calls that would come in for special meetings, I launched out with a wife and five children, and to the glory of God, after a quarter of a century, can give

testimony that without a mission to support me, without a deputation secretary to make known our needs at home, and without appeals on my part taking up collections, without having my name on any list, yet the Lord has graciously, wonderfully, faithfully met all the needs for these twenty-five years, and we praise him, and in this give testimony in this way. And then I like what Dan Crawford, the spiritual insight that he added.

He says, A society missionary friend expostulated with me as a married man not claiming a fixed salary. Something sure was his idea, sure is underlined. It was then that God spoke to me out of his word.

What settled the matter as to faith being the only definite thing was the following truth of God. The promise was by faith that it might be what? Sure. The promise was by faith.

It goes on to say that it might be sure to all the seeds, but never mind. Dan Crawford just cut it off there. The promise was by faith that it might be sure the only sure thing is faith.

That's true. What a wonderful thing to be engaged in the service of the Lord, working according to divine principles, and seeing the geared mesh, seeing the needs met in just the right amount at just the right time, and knowing that God is working

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