

Lake Geneva Bible Conference 1984-06 1

Timothy 2:15

by William MacDonald

The sermon explores the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:15 and the importance of obeying God's word in the church.

Duration: 40:51

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by reading from 1 Timothy 2:1-6, which emphasizes the importance of supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks for all people, including kings and those in authority. The speaker then shares a story about visiting a dying man who believed that having four sons was his ticket to heaven, highlighting the absurdity of such a belief. The speaker goes on to discuss the role of women in the church, stating that while they have a wonderful ministry from the Lord, they are not given a place of public leadership. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the significance of elders in the local assembly, suggesting that an unknown elder holds more value to God than the ruler of the greatest empire in the world.

Transcript

Thank you, Lauren. The message came across clearly from your heart to ours. I can sympathize with Brother Bill Howard.

It's really a sobering experience to hear your own obituary read. I had that experience a few weeks ago. It was a midweek meeting at Bethany in Oakland.

I went in a little early. I glad-handed all the saints, including the man who was going to be the chairman. The meeting settled down.

He got up on the platform, gave out the opening hymn, led in prayer, and then the announcement. We're sorry to announce that Bill McDonald has gone home to be with the Lord. Fred Greenlaw shouted out.

He's sitting here in the audience. I shouted out. The report has been grossly exaggerated.

What had happened was that a brother in one of the suburbs named Bill McConnell had gone home to be with the Lord, and the chairman attributed it to him. He attributed it to me. I felt like Tom Sawyer,

remember, when he attended his own funeral.

We've been taking up difficult passages of scripture, and I think we've come to an exceptionally difficult one tonight, and it's found in 1 Timothy 2, and it's the last verse of that chapter. 1 Timothy 2, verse 15. It says, Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Supposing you were teaching a class of junior high young people and one of them came to you and said, What does that verse mean? What would you say? While we stall for time, shall we read the entire chapter? Begin back in verse 1. I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. For kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time, whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle. I speak the truth in Christ and, lie not, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will, therefore, that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

It like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broided hair or gold or pearls or costly array, but which becometh women professing godliness with good words. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

And I'd like to read the first verse of the next chapter, and you'll wonder why. This is a true saying. If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.

There are an awful lot of portions of the word of God where great and godly men differ as to the interpretation. As to the great fundamentals of the faith, there's no disagreement. Worldwide, among Bible-loving believers, there's a great unity as far as the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

But there are many passages of scripture that are not fundamental, where good men differ as to the interpretation. There's one verse in Galatians that has over 250 explanations. One verse.

And I think that when we come to passages like that, it behooves us not to be too dogmatic. It behooves us to go to the word of God and study it and come up with the passage, the interpretation that best suits us as explaining it. I think Dr. Ironside was a help to me in that regard.

He was a very gracious man. A very kindly man. And I don't know why, but people were always trying to argue with him.

Always trying to fight with him. And they'd come up after the meeting to start a quarrel. And you know, if it was one of these secondary matters, he would say, well, brother, when we get to heaven, one of us is going to be wrong, and perhaps it'll be me.

But you know, that was the end of all argument. You know, if a man admits he might be wrong, there's nothing more you can say to him, is there? And I think it's a helpful attitude for us to have. What does the verse before us tonight mean? Actually, some people think that it means that a woman is saved through bringing numerous children into the world.

Since I've been here at a conference, I heard of a woman who had eight children and was depending upon that for entrance to heaven. How could God turn away someone who had brought eight children into the world? That wasn't a new twist for me, because some years ago I was over in Nazareth, Israel. I visited the hospital there to see a dying man.

His Christian brother brought me to see him. And I said to him, I said to the brother, does he know he's dying? And he said, oh, yes, he knows he's dying. I said, well, what does he think? He said, he has four sons.

What more could he ask for? That was his hope for heaven. Does that interpretation appeal to you? Well, I think we'd have to admit it's a pretty bizarre interpretation. A new way of salvation by the number of children you bring into the world.

I think we can all agree that's not the one. A second explanation is that the woman is preserved through the act of childbearing. If the condition met, if the condition is met, she shall be saved through the childbearing, the revised version said, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

That is a promise of preservation at that crucial time of her life. Does that appeal to you? You like that explanation? Well, I can think of a lot of mothers that were godly and yet weren't preserved at a time like that. And anyway, unsaved people seem to be just as preserved as saved people at that particular time in their existence.

I don't think that appeals to most of us. Third explanation is that the woman is saved from the corruption of society through being a keeper at home. In other words, she's within the confines of the home raising her family and she's cut off from all of the evil, the wickedness of the society around her.

Does that appeal to you? Well, it doesn't appeal to me because once again in our society at least it isn't exactly true. Some people believe that it refers to the birth of the Messiah. It was through a woman that the Messiah came into the world and she is saved through that Messiah.

Notwithstanding, she's going to be saved. And it does say in the original language of the New Testament, through the childbearing. And there are many who believe that that's what it means.

The childbearing meaning the birth of the Messiah. Well, of course, it is true that women are saved through the Messiah, but it's equally true that men are through the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah. As far as I'm concerned, we have to look somewhere else for a satisfactory explanation of the verse.

Before we come to it, let's take a walk through the chapter and see if we can get some other highlights in the chapter. It says first of all in verse 1, I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercession and giving of thanks be made for all men. Somebody might say, what's the difference between supplications, prayers, intercession? It's very hard to say what the difference is.

It's very hard to give definitions. My attitude in a case like this is I'd rather pray than know all the definitions of prayer. It's great to be a simple believer, isn't it? And it's better to pray than to know all the definitions of prayer.

Do you notice the last part of the verse? Be made for all men. Question, have you ever prayed for all men? Well, we don't. We pray for Tom, Dick and Harry.

We pray for people we know. We very seldom pray for all men. And yet that's the whole emphasis in these opening verses.

We should be praying for all men and we'll see why in just a minute. Then it goes on to say for kings and for all that are in authority. For kings and for all that are in authority.

This is very good. Do you know why it's good? Because we as Christians hold the balance of power in the world. We really do.

Through prayer we hold the balance of power in the world. Man will never be omnipotent. Only God is omnipotent.

But man never comes closer to omnipotence than when he prays in the name of the Lord Jesus. Do you know why? Because it's just the same as if Jesus were making those requests to the Father. I believe that through prayer we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can control the destiny of nations.

There are many, many instances where the tides of battle, for instance, have been turned through the prayers of God's people. Where rulers have been deposed through the prayers of God's people. One of the things, one of the regrets we're all going to have when we get to heaven is that we didn't pray more.

I think if most of us were honest, we'd have to agree that prayer is probably one of the weakest areas of our Christian life. Why do we do ourselves this great disservice that we don't pray more? It says we should pray for our rulers that we might live a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. All godliness and honesty, the King James says.

I never noticed that word honesty until just a couple of weeks ago. A fellow had just come back from one of the Eastern European countries, and he said, you know, I never understood that verse until I was in this country. He said it's very hard.

He said the government makes it very hard to live an honest life. By all of the regulations, by all the rules, by all the hindrances they put in the way of people, the communist government, he said, I know now why God has chosen me. God tells us to pray so that we might live an honest life.

Then it goes on to say that this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior. What is good and acceptable? That we pray for all men and especially for kings and for those in authority. Why is it good and acceptable? It says who wills that all men should be saved.

I was meditating on that today and it just rejoiced my heart. God wants all men to be saved. The five points of Calvinism notwithstanding.

God wants all men to be saved. You say, well, why aren't they saved if God wants? Because God doesn't save men against their will. Because God is not going to populate heaven with people who don't want to be there.

It would be like the Mafia in a prayer meeting. They wouldn't enjoy it and it wouldn't be heaven. But God wants all men to be saved.

This is not universalism, is it? All men are not going to be saved, but God wants them all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Think of the cost to which he went. One God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all.

I love it the way the Apostle Paul would go along and write for a while, speak for a while, but I tell you the compass always points north and he always comes back to Jesus, doesn't he? He always comes back to the Lord Jesus and you don't get very far before the Savior is there. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, I speak the truth in Christ, the teacher of the Gentiles. He wants all men to be saved, not just Jews.

Of course, that was the prevailing thought among the Jewish people. Jewish people considered themselves the chosen people of God and they really believed, many of them really believed, that God made Gentiles as fuel for the fires of hell. And Paul disabuses their minds in this passage.

He wants all men to be saved, Gentiles as well as Jews, and God appointed Paul to be a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Now he says in verse 8, I will therefore that men pray everywhere. Men.

Now there are two words in the original language of the New Testament for men. One is mankind in general. The other is male in contrast to female.

And the word here is male. I will therefore that the males pray everywhere. I'm wondering what's going on in your mind.

Who is this anachronism standing before us tonight? Has he never heard of the culture in which we live today? Has he never heard of the Equal Rights Amendment? Has he never heard of the feminist movement? Dear friends, I have to go by the word of God. And the word of God says, I will therefore that the males pray everywhere. And I suggest those who are taking notes tonight that you write down the words of Martin Luther.

He said, my conscience is captive to the word of God. And I want my conscience to be captive to the word of God. Once or twice while I was teaching in Emmaus, I had a very uncomfortable experience where a student would ask me something and I would answer it.

And the answer, even as I was answering it, I was thinking that's very weak as far as the scripture is concerned. And he knew it was weak. And pretty soon I was back into a corner and then he let me have it with the word.

It's a very uncomfortable experience. It's a very comfortable experience to have the word of God on your side, isn't it? To go by the word of God. And here it says, I will therefore that the males pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.

The emphasis is not so much on the lifting as it is on the type of hands, holy hands without wrath and disputing. Why does it say that? Well, I tell you, it's really pretty hard to lift up holy hands and even to pray when things aren't right with your brothers and sisters. I mean, when you're quarreling, when there's contention, when there's strife, when there's conflict, how can you lift up holy hands without wrath and disputing? The word of God is really wonderful.

It comes to us right where we are. Then it goes on to this, and incidentally, this chapter has to do with public worship, has to do with public worship. It says, in like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with samefastness and sobriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly array, but which becometh women professing godliness with good works.

The women are not to adopt the lifestyle of the pagan world around them. It's really what it's saying. In other words, Christian women are to be different.

They don't have to be dowdy, that's not the thought, but different. They don't have to follow immodest styles created by some designer in an attic on the left bank of the Seine. And it applies to men, and as it applies to women, you and I should never do anything in this whole area that makes it hard for someone else to live the Christian life.

Let me say that again, we should never adopt any immodest style that would make it hard for anybody else to live the Christian life. Then it says, but I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the men, but to be in silence. Now, I just want to share a little family secret with you tonight.

If this was a mixed audience, I'm sure I wouldn't do it, but it's a little fact of life in Christian circles that generally speaking, we do what we want to do, and what we don't want to do, we rationalize away. I'm going to give you some illustrations of that. Paul, Saul, when Saul rose to the kingdom, he made a marvelous decree that all witches should be banned from the land.

It was good, you know, exterminate all the witches. When he wanted to look into the future, what did he do? He went and consulted the witch of Endor. And we're something like that.

If there's a verse of scripture we don't like, we can get around it. You can believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of the scriptures. You can contend earnestly for the fact that those scriptures as originally given were absolutely inerrant.

And yet, if there's a passage of scripture you don't like, you can think of 60 theological reasons why it doesn't mean what it says. Let me give you some illustrations. It can't mean that literally.

It's only a general principle. Did you ever hear that? It can't mean that literally. If the first sense makes sense, don't look for any other sense.

Cream lies on the surface. One great man of God said, I do not care for novel interpretations of scripture. Cream lies on the surface.

But that's one way we get around the plain teachings of the word of God. It can't mean that literally. Number two, you have to use common sense.

Have you heard that one? You have to use common sense. I wish I had a nickel for every time I've heard it. I want to tell you something.

The word of God is above common sense. I remember dear Ray Lynch praying in a prayer meeting one time overseas and he said, in a prayer, oftentimes common sense in the things of God is no better than rat poison. There are situations where that's true.

No better than rat poison. Number three, the Lord knows I have to live, doesn't he? I mean, all these stern demands of the Lord Jesus on the lifestyle of his disciples. The Lord knows I have to live.

A young man said that to Spurgeon once. The Lord knows I have to live. Spurgeon said, I do not grant that.

We have to obey God. That's right. Who said we had to live? We have to obey God.

Another one. We've never done it that way. Tradition.

That's the traditional argument. We've never done it that way. I think if I had the time, I could prove to you from the scriptures the fact that the early church practiced instant baptism.

They baptized people on the basis of their profession of faith in Christ. Instant baptism. I don't think you can find any exception to it in the New Testament.

Well, we've never done it that way. Maybe we ought to try it. The Lord only means that I should be willing to do it.

You ever hear that one? He doesn't mean that I have to do it. He just means that I have to be willing to do it. Or, I know that's what the Bible says, but in my case, the Lord wants to make an exception.

That's great. In other words, here's a girl and she's in love. She's a Christian girl and she's in love with an unsaved fellow.

And she knows that 2 Corinthians 6 forbids the unequal yoke. But she says, in this case it's different. God wants me to marry him so that I can lead him to Christ.

See what I mean? That girl believes in the verbal plenary inspiration of the scriptures. She'd be indignant if you said this wasn't the word of God. But she makes it void through all of these rationalizations.

I heard this one and I was really astounded. I really heard this one out on the West Coast recently. You shouldn't obey if it would offend somebody.

It had to do with a particular practice in the New Testament church. And she said, you shouldn't do it if it would offend somebody. And then, of course, the last one that I'd mention to you is the cultural argument.

And the reason I'm saying that and keeping it to last, because that's the one that's so strong today. Where we say, well, what Paul is saying, Paul was a chauvinist, you know. And what he's saying there was just reflecting the culture of the day in which he lived.

And, you know, we take and we try to bend the Bible to the culture of our day. And it's a dangerous thing to do. I don't want to bend the Bible to culture.

I want to bend culture to the Bible. There was a carpentry shop and it was a sign outside. And it said, all kinds of twistings and turnings done here.

And I think that should be by our Bible studies sometimes. All kinds of twistings and turnings done here. And this is commonly used today to explain away these passages of Scripture.

Let a woman learn in silence with all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. Just the day in which the Apostle Paul lived for the early days of the Christian church.

But it wasn't. It was abiding teaching for all time. You say, how do you know? Because the next verse says so.

Why did Paul go back to creation if it was just for the day in which he lived? He says, for Adam was first formed, then Eve. He goes back to the priority in creation. And what he's really saying is, look, in the creation, God gave headship to the man.

And subordination, but not inferiority to the woman. And he bases it upon what happened in Genesis 1 through 3. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived within the transgression. But then we come to our own verse tonight, and it's really beautiful.

It says, notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing. I'd like to tell you what I see in this verse. God did not give woman a place of leadership in the church.

But he gave her a much more wonderful ministry, and that is to raise up leadership for the church. William Wallace said years ago, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Think about that for a minute.

Who said that the greatest thing is to stand up in a meeting and pray audibly or to stand up and preach and teach publicly? Who said that was the greatest thing? Something greater than that. For a woman to raise a godly seed. I have a dear friend out in Fullerton, California, and she was attending a luncheon one day where a lot of career women were talking.

And each one was talking about her marvelous career and the fulfillment she was finding in that career. And then one of those ladies turned to Charlotte and said, and what do you do, Charlotte? And Charlotte said, I raise men for God. And she did.

She raised three fine stalwart men for God. I don't think there's any higher calling in the world. John Wesley said he learned more about Christianity from his mother than from all the theologians of Europe.

And a lot of us could say the same thing. Somebody asked that man, what is your favorite gospel? Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He said, neither the gospel according to my mother.

You think of great men of God like Moses and the mother of Moses behind those men, the formative influences that were brought to bear by their mother. I think of Hudson Taylor, that dear, devoted mother, leaving a tract on the table in the living room one day. And Hudson came in and he looked down and he saw the words, the finished work of Christ.

He said, if he finished it, I don't have to. And he was converted and went out to inland China to evangelize it for the Lord Jesus. Think of Susanna Wesley, how many children, 19.

And every night she spent an hour with one of those 19. And her two sons, John and Charles, were raised up of God to save Britain from the devastation that afflicted France during the revolution. Don't tell me women don't have a wonderful ministry from the Lord.

They certainly do. The woman is not given a place of public leadership in the church. Her role is to raise up leaders, to raise up a godly line.

And you know, that's why I read the first verse of the next chapter. We think, oh, change in subject, you know, I don't think it's a change in subject. Right after that last verse in chapter 2, Paul goes on to discuss elders in the local assembly.

Would I shock you tonight if I tell you that an elder, unknown elder in a local assembly means more to God than the ruler of the greatest empire in the world. And I really believe it. I believe the humblest, weakest fellowship of Christians means more to God than the greatest nation in the world.

And I believe that an elder in a local assembly means more to God than the ruler of the greatest empire in the world. You say, how can you ever say such a rash thing? Well, just think of all the place in the New Testament that's devoted to elders. And then think of all the place in the New Testament that's devoted to how to be a good king.

What a difference, isn't there? Tells you the way God is thinking. So I believe that the last verse of chapter 2 says that the woman will be saved in childbearing. That is, this is not the salvation of her soul, but the salvation of her position in the church.

When we think of salvation, we always think of the salvation of the soul. But salvation is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. It's used in the New Testament.

Deliverance from prison. Deliverance from shipwreck. And here it's used in Philippians 2, the solution of a problem.

And here I believe it refers to the salvation of the woman's position in the church. The preceding verses might seem to indicate that woman is given an inferior place in the church. Are you with me? Go over those preceding verses, and you might think, because she's not given a public place in the church, that her position is inferior.

I think Paul is saying, not at all. If anything, it's superior. She raises up the leadership for the church that I'm about to describe to you, and which he does describe to us in the very next chapter.

Never under... Oh, you say, what about a single woman who doesn't have children? Or a married woman who doesn't have children? Well, I say the Bible can't take up every individual case, can it? It would be like the New York telephone directory, and we couldn't take it to meetings with us. The Bible deals with these general terms. But I tell you, it doesn't cut off a single woman from having a very distinguished place in the kingdom of God.

I think of all the single missionary ladies in the world today, and how they've influenced nations, as well as individual men and women. Even slaves are not cut off from the best blessings of Christianity. And so, in closing, I'd like to read a tribute to mothers, and it's called, My Meanest Mother.

It says, I had the meanest mother in the world. While other children ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs, or toast. When others had Cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich.

As you guessed, my supper was different from other children's also. But at least I wasn't alone in my suffering. My sisters and two brothers had the same mean mother as I did.

My mother insisted upon knowing where we were all the time. You'd think we were in a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and what we were doing.

She insisted if we said we'd be gone an hour, that we'd be gone an hour or less, not one hour and one minute. I'm nearly ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us. Not once, but each time we did as we pleased.

Can you imagine someone actually hitting a child just because he disobeyed? Now you begin to see how mean she really was. While the other girls were wearing miniskirts and smoking cigarettes, we had to be little grandmas and were called old-fashioned. Mother would not even let us go to the drive-in movies.

How could she be so mean? The worst is yet to come. We had to be in bed by nine each night and up early the next morning. We couldn't sleep till noon like our friends.

So while they slept, my mother actually had the nerve to break the child's labor law. She made us work. We had to wash dishes, make beds, learn to cook, and all sorts of cruel things.

I believe she lay awake at night thinking up mean things to do to us. She always insisted on our telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, even if it killed us, and it nearly did. By the time we were teenagers, she was wiser, and our life became even more unbearable.

None of this tooting of the car horn by the boys for us to come running. She embarrassed us no end by making our dates and friends come to the door to get us. I forgot to mention, while my friends were dating at the mature age of 12 and 13, my old mean mother refused to let me date until the age of 15 and 18.

Fifteen, that is, if you dated only to go to a school function. That was maybe twice a year. My mother was a complete failure as a mother.

None of us has ever been arrested, divorced, or beaten his mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of this country. And whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right, our mean mother.

Look what we all missed. We never got to march in a protest parade, or to take part in a riot, or burn draft cards, a million and one things that other children did. God forced us to grow into God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

Using this as a background, I am trying to raise my three children. I stand a little taller when my children call me mean. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for your precious word.

We thank you for the wisdom, the manifold wisdom of God which we see in it. And we bow our heads tonight in tribute and thanksgiving for godly mothers. Mothers whose hand rocks the cradle and rules the world.

We thank you for mothers tonight who raise up sons and daughters for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, that their position in the church is saved in this way through childbearing as they continue in the faith, in sobriety, and all the other characters of godliness. We thank you for our mothers.

We pray that you will increase their number in the days to come. We ask it as we give our thanks. In Jesus' name, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11861.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/lake-geneva-bible-conference-1984-06-1-timothy-215/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net