

Ministry From 1 Timothy

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and loving the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the significance of salvation by grace, assurance of salvation, and eternal security.

Duration: 35:32

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal testimony of coming to faith in Christ at the age of 18. He describes his initial resistance and fighting against God, but eventually surrendering and trusting in Jesus as his Savior. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being grounded in the grace of God and the assurance of salvation through the Word of God. He highlights the incredible love and grace of God in sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, offering eternal life to all who believe.

Transcript

as to what are the truths that you really love from the sky? I know you love them all, but there are some that really stand out above the others. And there was no question in my mind what should come first. One, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why I read that that verse. Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.

Sometimes I think we read the Bible too casually, don't we? I mean, we should read those words with a gasp and punctuate it with several exclamation marks. God was manifest in the flesh. The person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm so glad that there are truths in the Bible that my little mind can't take in, and one of them is the person of the Lord Jesus. How you can have a person who's God and man at the same time? It's more than the human mind can take in. But that's good, because if we could understand everything in the Bible, we'd be as great as the Bible and as great as the one who wrote it, and we never will be.

But it is marvelous, isn't it, to think of the Lord Jesus with God the Father in eternity, bygone eras, the object of angelic worship, and then see the creation taking place, and seeing sin entering into the world, and seeing man estranged from God, cut off from God, and God's great heart of love beating with an extra pulse, because he loved those creatures, his hands had made. How is he going to ever save them? How

is he ever going to bring them to heaven with himself, to spend all eternity in glory with him? And then, of course, you know the answer. The answer was to give his well-beloved son.

And you think of that time when the Lord stepped out of the ivory palaces and came down to the ante room of this earth, the womb of Mary, and born there as a baby in Bethlehem. I tell you, that's too much for my mind, that I look on that baby and I realize it's God. It's God the Son.

And I see him growing up there in Nazareth and in Galilee, and he seems just so like us as we said the other night, but he wasn't. He was like us in many ways, but the only perfect life that was ever lived upon this earth. Sinless, just imagine, sinless.

And then how he went to the cross of Calvary. God died there for us. I was thinking of that last night at our missionary conference.

A brother read from Acts chapter 20, and verse 28 says, Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. God purchased with his own blood. And you say, now brother, there's a theological difficulty there.

God doesn't have blood. You know, I think that was placed in our Bible in Acts chapter 28 just because of its shock value. The shock of the wake that the one who died on Calvary's cross was the one who created us and who loved us unto death and was willing to pour out his life's blood for us.

We might spend eternity with him. You know, the more you study the life of the Lord Jesus as it's portrayed in the scriptures, the more wonderful it is. You never get over a sense of wonder that this marvelous person, and I've said before, no human being can write the story of a perfect life.

Men have tried, but nobody has succeeded. No matter what they write, there'll be flaws in it. But here we have the story of a perfect life, and you can't find any flaw in him, whatever.

Try it when you go home from the meeting. Try to write the story of a perfect life. You won't be able to do it.

The person you write about will not have all virtues in even proportions. Maybe he'll be more loving than something else, more kind than something else, more truthful. But the Lord Jesus had every virtue in perfection in his life.

There's no fault in him. None. Whatever.

I often think of that going through life. I meet people, and they have wonderful characteristics, Christian people. You think, well, I just admire that person for his evenness of temper.

I admire that person for his loving, gracious, humble spirit. But the more you get to know us, it's not all that good, is it? None of us bears close inspection, is what I want to say. So how wonderful the Lord Jesus, he has all those things in him.

Every good that you could ever see in a human being down here on earth, the Lord Jesus has them all combined in him. I think that's wonderful, don't you? That's why we love him. Whom having not seen, we love.

That's a miracle, isn't it? None of us has ever seen him. We love him passionately, and would lay down our lives for him, I hope. Whom having not seen, we love.

We rejoice with joy and speak of him full of glory when we think of him. And the life of the Lord Jesus is the subject of endless praise and adoration. And his wonderful work for us on the cross, his death, his burial, his resurrection, and his ascension back to heaven, where he's now our advocate, the right hand of God.

I tell you, it means something. It means something to me today to know there's someone there in heaven for me, because I know that Satan goes night and day to God the Father, accusing me. He does.

He does. It says that in the Bible. Night and day, he's the accuser.

He never stops. And I'm glad I have an advocate there, and he has the wounds of Calvary in his hands, feet, and thighs. And he says, charge it to my account.

I died for all of that, of the cross of Calvary. Satan can't say a word. Wonderful, isn't it? Really wonderful.

That ministry, our present ministry of the Lord Jesus at God's right hand today. I'm sure if we could just open this up for discussion, everyone here who knows and loves the Lord Jesus would have wonderful things. I was thinking this morning, of all the hymns that have been written about, I don't think there's any other person who's ever lived who said that many songs written about them.

Do you? Who is it? Nobody. I don't know anybody in all the world who's had any books written about him. Let me know afterwards if you can think of somebody.

Ridiculously enough, think of the works of art. Michelangelo and those men. What do you think of their subjects? The Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus. Some of the sculptures of Michelangelo. Pieter.

His person and work have been the theme of just endless subject, endless research, and endless worship. So, when I think of the glories of the Christian faith and all it means to me today, I tell you, I think of the lovely Lord Jesus and it makes you want your friends to know him too, doesn't it? And we could spend hours on that. A second truth that means so much to me today, salvation by grace.

I really think that word grace is one of the key words of the Christian faith. I don't really think you understand Christianity if you don't understand grace. Because most people in the world think of salvation in terms of law.

They think in terms of what you have to do in order to be saved, right? Of merit that you have to keep up before God in order to win his smile of approval. Of a character that you must be able to present to God. But that's not grace, that's law.

Law tells you what to do. Grace tells you what Christ has done for the cross of Calvary. Law says, thou shalt.

Grace says, God speaking, I will, I will. Law tells you of a work you'll never be able to finish. Grace tells you about a finished work that took place 2,000 years ago at the cross of Calvary.

And it's a wonderful thing to me to know that when God devised this great plan of salvation, he devised it on the basis of grace. That is, God's favor going out to people who don't deserve it, but who deserve the very opposite. That's the truth of the matter.

Did you ever see a man who ought to be in hell? Well, you'll look at one this morning. You're looking at one this morning. I ought to be in hell.

But for some reason, I'll never know. God wanted me to be saved, to spend eternity with him in heaven, to give me everlasting life. The only way he could ever do it was on the basis of grace.

It was grace that brought the Lord Jesus down. It was grace that made him die there on the cross of Calvary. It was grace that sent out the message to me, only believe, and I'll give you everlasting life.

Isn't it a question of what you can do, what you can be, the question of what God will do for you if you'll simply come on his terms. It is so hard for men to believe that, isn't it? So hard for men to take in this whole concept of grace. Man is so used to thinking of only good people go to heaven.

Very hard for them to ever take it in that only ungodly people go to heaven. Only people who don't deserve to be there will ever be there. That's wonderful, isn't it? And that lets us all in.

If we'll come, the blood sprinkles rain. That's why I love Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, for by grace are you saved. Through faith, is that not of yourselves? The gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Grace, not law. Faith, not works. God saves us when we trust Christ as our only hope for salvation.

Not when we work in order to get to heaven. When we trust Christ as our substitute on the cross of Calvary. That not of yourselves, it's the gift of God.

The idea of gift and grace are bound together just like my two hands, like grace, gift. I think we read those verses last week, didn't we, from Romans 4, 4 and 5. Now to him who works is the reward, not of grace, but of debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.

That's a bomb, those two verses. They're a bomb because they run so contrary to what man believes. That's what God says, what God says that counts.

I don't know anything better than for people to get grounded in the grace of God. When people get saved, get them grounded in the grace of God. I tell you, it's going to mean an awful lot to them in later life.

It means a lot to me. Grace. Third truth that means tremendous out to me is the truth of assurance of salvation through the word of God, through the word of God.

I've told you the story many times before, but I have to tell it again because this is part of my testimony. When I was 18 years of age, God did a little spiritual surgery on me. He opened up my life and showed me the way he saw me, not the way I saw myself, the way he saw me.

I tell you, it wasn't a very nice picture. It wasn't a very nice picture. And I wretched, you talk about discomfort, miserable, and I fought against the Lord, fought against him.

And I put off though, I knew what I should do. I knew I should trust Christ as my savior. I put it off.

And I knew I was in danger. I knew if I died, I remember a kid on our street dying of leukemia. And I thought, boy, if that had been me, where would I be tonight? Finally, when I was about 18, I gave in.

I gave up the battle. It was kind of stupid, wasn't it? Fighting against God. But when I trusted the Lord, I didn't get that great dramatic experience that a lot of people have.

I don't doubt it. There's no question salvation affects every part of you. It affects your emotions as well.

But I didn't have a great emotional experience. And that sunk me into gloom and despair because I figured I wasn't saved. And I'd go to a meeting and I said, I wish the preacher would ask us to raise our hands if we wanted to be saved at the end.

And they never would. I wanted them to. I wanted to raise my hand.

I wanted to do something like that. I wanted to know I was saved. They never would.

I know during that time when I was 18 years of age, I bowed the knee and the best way I knew how I accepted the Lord as my savior. But I expected something dramatic to happen and it didn't happen. I don't know the first time I trusted Christ.

I did it over again. I said, well, Lord, if I've never been saved before, I'll be saved now. You know, I'll trust you now.

I looked for the happy feelings to come. No happy feelings. God was working in my life.

He was wanting to teach me a lesson. And that lesson is this. Assurance of salvation comes not through feelings, but through the word of God.

When I saw that, it was just like a tongue lifted off my shoulders. And the verse that he used is 1 John 5, 13. These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

Even ye that believe in the name of the Son of God. And I learned that assurance of salvation doesn't come from your feelings. I don't know I'm saved because I feel happy.

Assurance of salvation comes through the scriptures. I'll never forget that. I'll never forget that.

It was so wonderful to me. You see, I had been looking in the wrong place for assurance of salvation. God loved me too much to let me base my hopes of salvation on my variable feelings.

And I can honestly stand here and tell you today that since I got that matter settled between me and the Lord, I've never had any doubts since then. Satan has come and tried to get me to doubt my salvation. I keep going back to the word of God.

Just come and say, McDonald, hmm. If you were really saved, you wouldn't think that thought that you just thought. Or if you were really saved, you wouldn't let those words slip out of your mouth that slipped out of your mouth this morning.

All I do is go back to the word of God. John 5, 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death until I quote the word of God and he leaves me.

Why? Because he has nothing more to say. The devil can't fight against the scriptures. He can't fight against the word of God.

That's what the Lord did, wasn't it, in the temptation in the wilderness when the devil came to him with his temptation. He quoted scriptures. That's what I do.

That's what I do. And I've never had a serious case of doubting my salvation. Once I realized I have trusted Christ.

There were no dramatic things happening, but I just received him as my Lord and Savior. I didn't get any happy feelings. I've had a lot of them since then.

But it wasn't my feelings that told me I was saved. But I tell you, once I knew I was saved based upon the word of God, the happy feelings really came, didn't they? They came then. It's wonderful.

Assurance of salvation through the word of God and not through your feelings. Another wonderful truth that I cherish in the word of God is the truth of the eternal security of the believer. It's wonderful.

John 10, 27, 28, 29. My sheep hear my voice and I know them. They follow me and I give unto them eternal life.

Eternal life. They shall never perish. Neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand.

My Father which gave them to me is greater than all and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. And I think that's wonderful. We're not only saved by grace, we're kept by grace.

Dear friends, if I had to keep myself, I'd have been lost long ago. But I'm kept by Christ's hand and Christ's hand is in God the Father's hand and nobody is able to pluck me out of his hand. I tell you, when God saves the soul, he really saves them.

He saves them for all eternity. That's what eternal life means, doesn't it? Among other things. It means that we're saved forever and ever and ever.

And well, what do you do? What happens when you sin? Don't you lose your salvation? A lot of people think that. They think when you sin, you lose your salvation. You see, when the Lord Jesus died, he died for all my sins.

When he died, all my sins were future and he died to pay the penalty of them all. So the penalty is taken care of at the cross of Calvary. Does that mean I want to sin? Oh, no.

The grace of God that saved me is the greatest motivation to me to live a holy life. The greatest motivation to live a holy life. I can't turn my back on Christ and what he did at Calvary and go on in that which nailed him to the cross.

It's a wonderful thing. A wonderful thing. Eternal.

A wonderful thing to know that I'm forgiven. I wonder if there's somebody here today and the past comes up. You think about things that happened in the past and you squirm.

You get something miserable, you talk out loud to yourself. If just there was some way of blotting out the past, there is. There is.

There's some way of blotting out the past. I think it's wonderful. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me clean again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. That's a wonderful thing to know that my past is put away as far as the east is from the west. So far as he removed my transgressions from me.

How far is the east from the west? I think I mentioned before, I'm glad he didn't say from the north to the south because you could measure that. You can't measure the east from the west. My sins are put away an immeasurable distance, buried in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

He'll never remember them again. I'm eternally secure in Christ. How is that? Because I'm so strong to live the Christian life.

There's somebody in heaven living for me, the Lord Jesus. It's great. Great.

I rejoice in the truth of the two natures. I don't rejoice in that old nature, but I rejoice in the truth. Because you see, a lot of people think when they get saved, then they live sinless lives.

But that's not what my Bible teaches. It doesn't teach that the Christian is sinless. It does teach that he sins less.

But it teaches this. First of all, born into this world, I had an old, evil, corrupt nature. Really rotten.

That's what God showed me when I was 18. He showed me that old nature. Nobody with a nature like that can go to heaven.

Incidentally, that's the nature that feeds on pornography, feeds on everything that's rotten and filthy and vile. But I'm glad that when I got saved, God put a new nature in me. That's the life of Christ.

I'm really kind of schizophrenic. I have two natures in me. I have an old, evil, corrupt nature, and I have a new nature, the very life of Christ.

And they're always fighting like this. Always fighting one another. The constant battle goes on within the life of the Christian.

You say, which nature wins? Well, the nature you feed is the nature that wins. But actually, it's the new nature that wins. Because the word of God says, sin shall not have dominion over you because you're not under the law, but you're under grace.

And the same grace that saved me gave me the Holy Spirit, who is the power for holy living. Sin is different in me now that I'm saved. Before I was saved, I sinned naturally.

It was just the natural thing in the world to do. Now that I'm saved, I don't really sin with the full consent of my will. I really don't.

It's a foreign thing. It's a foreign thing to me. And I don't want to go on in that which crucified the Son of God.

And so, I feed on the word of God, and I spend time in prayer, ask the Lord to keep me from the hated thing. And I understand this. I understand myself better when I know there are two natures in there.

There's a wolf nature and the lamb nature. The wolf nature is fierce. The lamb nature is like the Lord Jesus.

It is his nature, really, in me. I rejoice in that truth. It's all there in Romans chapter 7, isn't it? Paul describes this battle that went on within him.

He knew what to do. He didn't do it. There was that part in him that wants to do what's right, and there's a part in him that wants to do what's wrong.

And there, he said, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And there are people, there are Christians of the world today living clean lives, living holy lives, not by their own strength, but by the power of God. Then I rejoice, too.

Another truth that I have tremendous joy in thinking about is my position in Christ, what I am in Christ today. I'm nothing in myself. You know, when God saves me, he no longer sees me as Bill McDonald in the flesh.

He sees me in Christ, and he accepts me on that basis. And that's why you have such wonderful expressions in the Word. It says, Accepted in the Beloved.

He accepts me in his own Son. Complete in Christ. That's wonderful, isn't it? That means when you have Christ, you don't need anything else to make you fit for heaven.

Christ is your ticket to heaven. Seated in Christ in heavenly places. I love that.

Meaning more to me as the days go by. Seated in Christ. God sees me not here on earth looking up into heaven, but he sees me in heaven looking down on earth.

And that changes your whole perspective. I can't get too involved in the politics that are going on now. I get pretty discouraged if I did.

But when you get up high and look down, it doesn't seem so important. That's what it says. Seated in Christ in heavenly places.

And I tell you, one of the most wonderful truths in the Word of God is the position that God has given the child of God. When a person is saved, the position is given him in Christ. It means that God loves me as much as he loves his own beloved son because I'm in his son.

It means I can't be nearer to God than I am because I'm near as Christ is. And we sing that. One of our hymns says that near so very near to God I could not nearer be for the person of his son I'm as near as he.

Dear so very dear to God I could not dearer be the love wherewith he loves his son such is his love for me. I wonder what the angels think when they look down and see what God's salvation has done for people. They shake their heads in utter amazement because they don't have that.

Angels never felt the joy that our salvation brings. As far as we know, there's no salvation for fallen angels. There is, the Bible doesn't say anything about it.

It says, no you're not, that we shall judge angels. Doesn't say they'll be saved. It just must be there the cause of endless wonder among the angelic beings when they look down see what the grace of God has done for people who don't deserve it.

And God sends his son to die for us. And he says, okay, just come. Come in faith.

Accept the Lord Jesus as your salvation. I'll take you home to heaven. Glorify you in heaven.

You'll be with me for all eternity. Really wonderful, isn't it? Really wonderful. Our position in Christ.

Another great truth to me is the truth of the inspiration of the scriptures. Actually, in some ways I should have put this first because it's so basic. It means an awful lot to me that in this Bible that I hold in my hand, I have the revelation of God to man.

The word, not that this book contains the word of God, it is the word of God. And every word in this book that's originally given by God is the very word of God. Therefore, it's infallible.

There's no risk in believing it. God cannot lie, cannot be deceived, cannot deceive others. If he says it, it's true.

And I think it's a wonderful thing to have a book in my hand and know God is speaking to me in this book. He's speaking in all of the circumstances of life. There's guidance for me in this book through all of life.

There is, too. Nothing that you'll ever encounter in life that isn't answered in here. This whole book is my guide.

It's a friend by my side. It will lighten and brighten my way. All the promises that God gives me, heaven, the road to heaven paved with the promises of God in this wonderful, wonderful book.

What a book it is, huh? The book of God. And all scripture is given by inspiration of God. It means it's God-believed.

And it's profitable. Profitable for every aspect of the Christian life. Maybe some of you here today wonder why we're so Bible-centered.

Why everything we have, we have to go back to, we have to, what does the Bible say about it? That's why. This is the Word of God, not the Word of men. And we test everything by this wonderful book.

I'm going to stop there today, and maybe we'll go on to some of those other wonderful truths next week, Lord willing. Some of you who are Christians, what are some of your favorite truths in the Word of God? I'm sure I've touched on many of them today, but some of them you haven't thought about. Shall we look to the Lord in prayer, and then Daryl will come up and lead us in the closing hymn? Father, our hearts overflow in thanksgiving when we think of what you've done for us miserable, wretched men and women, covered with sin and iniquity and transgressions.

And yet your delights were with the sons of men, and your great heart of love could never be satisfied until you have the redeemed with you home in heaven. We thank you for the grace that sends out the gospel invitation today, and that men and women, young men and young women, boys and girls, all they have to do is come, confess their sinnership before you, reach out by faith, touch the hem of Christ's garment, receive him as Lord and Savior, and you just pour out all the blessings of heaven upon that person. We

just thank you.

We pray that these truths might be more precious to us as the days go by. We ask it in the Savior's name, and for his sake. Amen.

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