

---

# A Charge to Keep

## 2 Timothy 4:1-8

*Russ Kennedy*

For: Jim Hoium

Here it is. The Word of God, the Scriptures. They are God breathed and sufficient to equip the man of God for every good work. They are useful and profitable for each sphere of life and ministry, for all the steps and stops of bringing both the preacher of the Word and the people under the Word to maturity.

There are many tasks and responsibilities the Word of God gives the man serving as an elder-pastor. He must oversee the church along with the other elders. He must shepherd the people who are put in his charge. He must guide, guard and grow the church. He must feed and fend for his sheep. But there is no greater responsibility the elder-pastor has than to minister God's Word in his leading, teaching and preaching.

As we gather this morning to preach this charge to this man, Jim Hoium. We come knowing that he can be fully and thoroughly and completely equipped by the Word for all that God calls him to do. In the light of this then, how does the scripture equipped man minister?

A word about our eldership. All of the men except for the pastor leading the pulpit ministry serve as lay elders. They have full-time jobs as well a home and family responsibilities. They have different gifts and abilities all of which they bring to and contribute to the Eldership as a body. Jim will bring prior experience as an elder and gifts of administration to the Eldership. He will serve with men who give much, sacrifice much to care for this flock. Let each of us support, love, honor and respect each of the elders, setting our prayers and encouragement to them as men who love you, do the best they can and give so much of their life to serve you well. All of the men serve in the Word. They read it, study it, absorb it, discuss it, lead with it, teach in it... This is why this charge is the way it is. This charge is not just for the preaching elder or elders. Each elder, for his own ministry, serves as a Word man.

The solemn and serious words here then are for all, just as they were for Timothy. The man of God has the sufficient Scripture. This text rings with a powerful, clarion charge to serve in the word. Proclaim God's truth. Teach the Bible. God, through His gifts, His providences and His shaping of you as a person, has made you "able to teach." So in all the challenges you will face and the charge you will receive, remember that the Word is central. In all the ways you minister, serve God through His Word. This charge, though mostly about your responsibilities to the Word, also calls you to grace enabled obedience by faith in *every* aspect of your ministry.

And as you move forward in God's grace and by His Spirit, Jim, hear the word of this charge as we speak and pray over your life and ministry.

## **Its Stirring Exhortation (v.1-2)**

Here are words to make saints and elders tremble. Before the face of God, herald the Word God's way even when they won't listen from a life that authenticates your message.

<sup>1</sup> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

## **With a Solemn Charge (v.1)**

In God's presence and by His appearing... proclaim!

The motivating power to fulfill this charge rests the God we are serving. The awesome depths of His solemn majesty will keep us serving until the end. Our lives and ministry are open before His face and we serve in His presence. It is not just that He sees and knows, but that an accounting will be given to the One we are serving. What we do now is anticipating His appearing. What we are doing now is only the beginning of the kingdom that will one day be made full and complete. In the presence and in the sight and for the present pleasure and future glory of this great King: *preach the Word*.

Ultimately, your handling of the Word is accountable to God and not to man. Yes, you will function as one among a body of elders whose corporate understanding of doctrine holds you accountable. But in the end, you answer to God. So it is not our job to be liked, or to be popular or even to be accepted. It is possible for you to win wide acceptance and admiration and still be faithful in preaching. But we also must remember that faithfulness to Word will bring dislike and disapproval from many. However, we must have a sense in our study and our teaching that it is from the Word of God... to the people of God... before the face of God. This calls for humble courage to minister with integrity and with clarity.

What is it that you are to do? You are to *proclaim the Word*. This comes from a Greek word that means "to herald, to proclaim publicly, to announce with authority." You are not to speak as though the Word were the evening news or a political rally. You are not to speak as though the things you say are suggestions or mere human insights. You are to proclaim them as living, vital truths. You are to speak with authority. You are to be truly infused with the truths you speak. You are to have a true inner sense of the reality of the things you speak. You are to strive for authenticity that bleeds over the text you are studying and sing over the text as you are teaching.

It is the Word you are to minister to people. Now hear me, brothers. There will always be a subtle temptation to shift from teaching and preaching the message of the Bible:

... To talking ABOUT THE BIBLE. You replace the message and meaning of the text with a kind of ministry that is about the Bible's text rather than what God is saying through or in the text. It will look and sound Biblical; but it is not the message of the Word.

... To teaching the THEOLOGY FROM THE BIBLE. You replace following the actual movement of the argument in the text with using the words and phrases in the text as a launching pad to do the theology behind those words and ideas. The subtle danger here is that we soon begin to impose our theological frameworks on the text.

... To focusing on TOPICS GLEANED FROM THE BIBLE. Thus the Bible is treated as an encyclopedia of theological, doctrinal, counseling, leadership truth. You are first and foremost responsible to minister the Bible *in the form that it appears*. Treat the Word you are handling with respect and integrity. Trust that God knew and understood what He was doing in giving us His revelation as He did. Do Word ministry that is not only from the Bible but also follows the Bible.

... To ministering that USES THE BIBLE TO SHOW OURSELVES OFF. Thus our ministry becomes an excuse for and exercise in self-glorification. May God preserve us. May His grace impart humbleness and meekness. May what ability we are given and we cultivate, be used to serve God's purposes and highlight His glory. May we always stand under God's Word, always stand behind His Word and never stand in front of His Word.

### **In a Timely Moment (v.1)**

When are we to do this? At all seasons. We must be ready when it is a reasonable time for the Word to be heard and when it is not. There will be seasons of mercy when people will listen. Then there will be seasons of hardness when people will not. And there will be seasons in our own lives when we are full with God's power and times when we are not. But we must at all times have the sufficient Word in our hands to meet the need of the hour and the people. We must feast from it ourselves, be transformed by it ourselves, believe it in an obeying way ourselves so that what we say to others is real to us.

### **By a Required Method (v.2)**

How are we to do this? Our ministry of the Word is to be characterized by all these words.

*Reprove* - Our work in the Word is to expose and convict, with authority (Titus 2:15), even severely (Titus 1:3) if necessary, as an expression of God's love and discipline (Revelation 3:19). We must have a sense of earnestness about sin and its effects in people's lives. We must rebuke, not because of some personal affront, but because God's holiness is being violated and His glory tarnished.

*Rebuke* – Our work in the Word is to mete out an appropriate and just correction. It must be designed to gain the attention of the sinning ones and cause them to halt from their sin. Those who sit under our ministry should be comforted when in distress and distressed when in comfort.

*Exhort* – Our ministry of the Word is to motivate and to provide steps of action so that people will want to move forward and will know how. From these words we can see that our ministry is to penetrate the heart. It must do so by informing the mind; but it must be aimed at the heart and true heart change. It must call for obedience from heart while depending solely on the grace of God to cause what we are calling for.

All of this is to be tempered with *great patience* and saturated with *instruction*. If we are hurried and impatient in the strong words of our teaching and preaching, it will simply become negative, critical and corrosive. Great patience and able instruction make even the bad tasting medicine of correction tolerable. We must powerfully communicate the Word with patient application arising from clear instruction. Our communication of truth ought to profit all the sheep in some way. It must be clear, challenging, convicting and Christ-centered. So *instruction* is foundational to our Word ministry and must fill our it. Our instruction must be proclaimed and heralded as with power and patience.

## **Its Motivating Explanation (v.3-5)**

Do not miss the connection. The Word must be ministered with readiness, reproof, rebuke, exhortation, great patience and instruction *BECAUSE* (for) the time is coming when people simply will not have it. They will hanker for something else and will do all they can to avoid it. This then is the environment in which you serve the Word and in which faithfulness is called for.

<sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

## **In a Difficult Context (v.3-4)**

Here is the sad decline that will be the context of ministry... As the times and epochs roll, more and more will people not endure sound doctrine. They will not have it.

The *result* is that doctrine is rejected and de-emphasized. People cannot stand to hear doctrine. Why?

The *root* of the matter is in what they want. They want the kind of preaching and teaching that is pleasing and palatable. It must tickle the ears. It must never thunder.

The *fruit* manifests itself in three ways:

### **They accumulate teachers who will follow their desires.**

They will turn away from the hard meat of doctrine to the sweet chocolates offered them. They collect those who say what they want to hear. And you must never be this sort of teacher. You must minister the Word with your people's real needs in view. They will come with their felt needs, and in this day, those felt needs are often used to identify those teachers they will listen to.

### **They turn away from truth.**

When one rejects doctrine, one is in the process of turning away from truth. It is inevitable. It is a terrible thing when people think they can reject doctrine and still have truth. And it is an even more terrible thing when elder/pastors turn away as well. What happens when they turn from truth?

### **They turn to myths.**

When one turns from truth in rejecting doctrine, you have to turn to something instead. Paul calls these myths. They are the deceptions that people live by. They are how people explain life. If they are not truth, then they are myths. And there are many myths to which even religious people turn. In the face of the myths of evolution, self-esteem, pragmatism, individualism what we must do is *PREACH THE WORD*.

### **In a Needed Contrast (v.5)**

But you must be different... What great words these are and so much needed today, not just by modern day Timothy's, but by all of God's serving saints.

### **Keep your head**

Realize that you need a serious and reflective approach to life and ministry. More and more we are besieged by frivolity and levity. What is needed are joyfully serious saints. And you need a level headedness for the days ahead. This calls for, in Piper's words, "gravity and gladness in ministry." There must be seriousness because of what is at stake and there must be gladness because God is behind it all. Keep your head in all things. Do not let the immediate emergencies knock you off keel. Stay the course.

### **Endure hardship**

We must hear this call to us. Our lives and our ministries are often easy. But they are more often very difficult. What does taking up a cross mean to this generation? And what will enduring hardship mean to you, Jim? It is not merely the inconveniences that attend ministry but the great suffering that sometimes falls hard on the choicest of God's men. For all of you, there is the weight of what God has set you aside to do along with all the "life" you must do as well. Embrace the hardship that guiding, guarding, and governing the flock will bring.

## **Do the work of an evangelist**

Timothy is not an evangelist for that is not his gift or calling. But in all of ministry he can do the work an evangelist does, that is, he can give the gospel in his Word ministry. And so can we and so will I and so will each elder here and so must you. You will in our church do the work of an evangelist. And when God gives you the opportunity, do the work of an evangelist. Speak to sinners about the supremacy and salvation of God. Press evangelistic texts home to our people. Cause them to consider carefully whether they are truly in the faith.

## **Finish the job**

Do everything that your ministry requires. Do both the work that you enjoy and the work you do not. Keep your sense of balance. Your first love will be studying and reading and teaching. But there will be "administrivia" to do as well. And there will be people with great and deep needs who will press on your time. Finish the job, do what your ministry requires. Study as you ought. Preach all you can. Shepherd faithfully. Organize and administrate as needed. This means do it every week until Jesus comes, whether He comes in your death or at His Parousia.

The essence of Paul's exhortation could be summed up in this short phrase: *DO WELL*. Do well because Paul intends to *DIE WELL*.

## **Its Inspiring Example (v.6-8)**

How many failing and faltering hearts have gained hope and received grace to finish from these words. What a great aim this is.

<sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

## **In his Facing Death (v.6)**

Facing death was simply the departure of a fully sacrificed life... His life was already being poured out. At some point, this great sacrifice will end in a departure. Interestingly, not as soon as he thought.

In the flourish of youth, it is sometimes hard to think of death. But you will not live well and minister faithfully as you ought unless death is ever a near and present and glorious and full-of-gain reality. Live and minister in such a way that there will be no sense of regret when God's providences bring you to that day.

## **In his Finished Course (v.7)**

What a mighty confidence to have at the end of one's life...

It is a life of the good fight well fought, the heavenward race well run, the standard of faith well kept. Reach forward with all of God's grace to hit the finish line still accelerating.

## **In his Future Reward (v.8)**

There is a crown of righteousness to all whose future hope shapes their present living... Do we love His appearing? We will if we are devoted to the one who is coming and have done the duty He requires of us. Do you love His appearing? Do you hunger for God and for that beatific vision of His great glory in the face of Christ?

---

## **Conclusion**

Beloved, minister the Word. Finish the race. Do well. Die well. Love God. Love people. For God has rescued us from our sins and will rescue us from every evil deed and will bring us safely to His heavenly kingdom, to Him be the glory forever and ever, Amen.



# *A Charge to Keep*

2 Timothy 4:1-8

Pastor Russ • The Chapel Pulpit • Sunday Morning

## ***Its Stirring Exhortation (v.1-2)***

**With a Solemn Charge (v.1)**

**In a Timely Moment (v.1)**

**By a Required Method (v.2)**

## ***Its Motivating Explanation (v.3-5)***

**In a Difficult Context (v.3-4)**

They accumulate teachers who will follow their desires.

They turn away from truth.

They turn to myths.

**In a Needed Contrast (v.5)**

Keep your head

Endure hardship

Do the work of an evangelist

Finish the job

## ***Its Inspiring Example (v.6-8)***

**In his Facing Death (v.6)**

**In his Finished Course (v.7)**

**In his Future Reward (v.8)**



---

## Personal Reflection and Application

- How does my understanding of this text affect my worship and my walk?

-