

A Charge For Pastors – 2 Tim 2:1-7

Thanks for that you guys; I missed that; We were blessed to worship in several churches while on vacation, but there's no place like home; Really thankful for that I'm also thankful for those who preached in my stead, and the ongoing ministry in my absence; We didn't miss a beat

➤ That said, we have a pretty special service ahead of us (**Intro**)

A commissioning service, where we are going to lay hands on 2 of our pastors, and formally commission them to a new work of ministry; As *Senior* Pastors I'm referring of course, to AJ Reynolds and Jeremy Hickman Both of whom leave this week for a 4 month stint at the Harvest *Training* Center for Pastors, and then from there to their respective churches and places AJ's in Monmouth, IL and Jeremy's yet to be determined

➤ But before we get to that, I want to share a few thoughts with them from 2 Tim 2 2 Tim 2:1-7; This passage is particularly *appropriate* for our occasion, b/c in it, Paul charges Timothy, *another* pastor, with the *same* ministry – leading a church Telling him what to expect and what to do; The very thing I want to do with you guys

And as I do, let me encourage you to listen in; First of all, to understand *their* role better; And 2nd, to apply these truths in *your* life Who knows? You might even receive a call to ministry as I speak; Or have it confirmed in your heart/soul like I did; Sitting in a similar service 16 years ago Whatever the case, there's something here for everyone; So let's get at it

➤ After affirming Timothy's *calling* as a pastor in chapter 1, he lays out 7 admonitions for how to *fulfill* it, in chapter 2 7 charges that apply just as much to you guys, as they did to Timothy; Starting in v1 [1] *You then, my child* [my spiritual offspring, my mentee, the one I've discipled over the years], *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*

Jeremy, AJ – the first charge that you have to *get*, and get *right*; The first truth that's critical to lead your church in a God-honoring way . . . And bear the most fruit possible for his glory and their joy, is to . . .

1. Draw near to Jesus (v1)

If you're going to fulfill your calling as a Senior Pastor, the lead shepherd – you have to draw *near* to the Great Shepherd That's the only way to be strengthened by his *grace* as Paul says it; His blessing

V1 – *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*

That is, be fortified, be sustained, be propelled by the unending, unmerited favor – that goes hand in hand with being close to Jesus Hand in hand with being *in* Christ; Hand in hand with being *near* to him Walking with him and talking with him along life's narrow way

➤ You'll never be more effective in your preaching and leading than when you're *near* to him, and never less effective than when you're *far* from him; Never And while very few pastors ever *intend* to drift from the presence of Jesus, the stresses and strains of ministry will push you there if you're not careful

From the weekly grind of preparing a message, to meetings that test your stamina, to interactions with difficult people, to the weight of being responsible for it all The stresses and strains of ministry tend to drive a wedge between you and the Lord

So that pretty soon, *being* with the Lord takes a back seat to *working* for the Lord And before you know it, your strength is gone; It happens So *start* here in your ministry, and never stop; Draw near to Jesus; That's the 1st charge

2. Reproduce yourself (v2)

If you're going to bear the most fruit possible, you need to reproduce yourself Paul says in v2 – *what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*

If the gospel is going to increase and multiply, if it's going to be proclaimed the way it should, if it's going to reach more than just a few . . . If the church of Jesus Christ is going to even *exist* in the next generation, you *have* to reproduce yourself; *You* do You have to entrust to others what you've heard and had entrusted to *you*, so that *they* will teach others, and do the same

That means constantly looking for men with a passion for God, a hunger for his Word, a gift of leadership, and a love for people; Constantly And then gathering them about you to disciple them, and reproduce yourself So that some become children's teachers, others Discipleship Group leaders, a handful elders, and a few pastors; Just like you guys

➤ Jeremy, you walked in here 12 years ago an unbeliever, living for yourself, and on the verge of making a mess of your life And after the Lord got a hold of your heart, you plugged in to ministry like and began to grow; So that over time, your passion for God, hunger for his Word . . . Gift to lead, and love for people couldn't be ignored; And the rest is history

AJ, you came to us with some ministry experience, already demonstrating those qualities In fact, after speaking at one of our student ministry camps, my girls came home and said I needed to hire you; B/c the things they knew I looked for, were obvious

2 vastly different paths, that have converged to the same place B/c we looked for and saw the qualities in you, that you need to look for/see in others So let me just say it to you like Paul said it to Timothy *What you have heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.* Pray for it now, and reproduce yourself

3. Lean into hardship (v3)

I wish I didn't have to say this to you; Or that there wasn't a need for it But there is; *You will have hardship*; No ministry is exempt, no church is excused, and no pastor is immune; *You will have tribulation* Especially so b/c you're no longer just *in* the battle, you're leading it

➤ Not only that, but the battle *lines* don't stop at the church door

When Becky and I planted this church, we were tested in our marriage more in the first *year*, than all of the previous 16 combined
And certainly more than we ever imagined while sitting in the pews or serving on staff
There *are no boundaries* to the hardship of ministry
It will affect every aspect of your life; Including, your kids

And of all things, Paul actually says in v3, to *share* in it; *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*. As in, be intentional about it
Instead of avoiding hardship and suffering, partake of it; Instead of dodging it, engage it; Instead of ducking it or trying to escape it, face it; Lean into it
That's what *good* soldiers do; And it often makes all the difference in the outcome

➤ I'm reading a book right now about the battle of Waterloo; And I've been struck by the fact that Wellington actually won the war, and Napoleon lost it; Didn't seem possible
And I can't help but wonder if part of the reason, was Napoleon's *aversion* to hardship, and Wellington's engagement in it

Napoleon, it was said, sat at a table in the rear or overlooked the battle from *afar*, while Wellington never left his horse and moved among his troops
Often times at the risk of his life; Shells exploding all around
IOW he *shared* in their suffering; And leaned *into* the hardship

And while your ministry as a pastor probably won't include death or dismemberment, it *will* include suffering on your part; Hardship
Including *anxiety* about giving and attendance; *Insecurity* in your role and giftedness; *Uncertainty* about how to proceed; And *attacks* from disgruntled people
Your ministry *will* include those kinds of hardship
And if you're going to be a good soldier of Christ Jesus, marching as if to war – you need to accept it, and lean into it

4. Stay focused (v4a)

Paul says in v4a – *No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits*
No soldier, no leader in God's army, no pastor – gets caught up in things that don't advance the kingdom; Civilian pursuits

There will be a million and one causes that clamor for your attention; And part of your job, is to ignore them
Your role as a Senior Pastor *demand*s that you stay away from the peripheral, and concentrate on the central; That you avoid the temporal, and focus on the eternal

➤ Which is easier said than done, when somebody in your congregation comes to you all fired up about something, and wants you to be fired up about it too
Usually in the lobby; And completely unrelated to the message you just preached

And in a church plant, it seems like they come out of the *woodwork* w/ civilian pursuits
Like the guy who came up to me one time and wanted to start a *pet* ministry
Now, don't get me wrong – I like pets; I have a dog, and she's a great joy
But I wasn't about to start a pet *ministry*; (A) B/c I don't even know what that means;
(B) They don't have souls . . .
And (C) I can think of about a hundred *better* ways, to reach people who *do*

It was ridiculous, and the answer was a gracious but firm, “no”
And yours needs to be the same; When peripheral causes clamor for *your* attention
B/c you need to stay focused

5. Lead for an audience of One (v4b)

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits [Paul says in v4], *since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him*.

Who *enlisted* you? Who called you unto salvation & compelled you to minister? God did
Which means pleasing *him* should be the only thing you worry about as a pastor
Not that you shouldn't listen to those around you and understand their perspective
Not that you shouldn't seek the input of your elders and heed their advice
But that your decisions should be made to please the Lord, and the Lord alone

And I gotta tell ya, of all the thoughts I'm commending to you, this is the most difficult
B/c the fear of man, and the desire people-please, are powerful forces of your flesh to the contrary; And they *constantly* weigh on your mind

➤ When you're dependent on the giving of your people to provide your personal livelihood, and support the work of ministry . . .
There's an overwhelming tendency to *cater* to their wishes; Over-whelming
“What if they don't *like* something I say or do? What if they stop giving? What if they leave the church? I want everybody to be happy; I want everybody to like me”
It's the fear of man and desire to please; And if you're not careful, it will undermine your efforts *to please the one who enlisted* you
So that you make decisions with *them* in mind, instead of with *God* in mind

It's hard; And it's real; And you need to be ever vigilant
So that the audience of *many*, doesn't replace the audience of *One*

6. Toe the line (v5)

[5] *An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules*.

The Olympics are upon us and thousands of athletes have descended on Rio; Every single one competing for a medal; Their *crown* if you will
But none of them will receive it if they don't compete *according to the rules*; If they don't refrain from things that taint their bodies or alter their performance

And the same is true for you; You're the athlete; And if you're going to receive the crown of “Well done good and faithful servant,” you have to toe the line of righteousness
You have to live a life of integrity; You have to abstain from ongoing sin; You have to battle temptation; You have to do what's right
An athlete [a pastor] is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.(v5)
According the principles of God's Word

➤ Does that mean your standard of conduct as a pastor is any different than anyone else's?
Yes; James 3:1 says – *that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness*
God calls us *all* to be holy as he is holy – true; But your path is narrower
Why? B/c the stakes are *higher*; The stakes of your failure
Your church has more to lose from *your* sin, than everybody else's put together

So whatever you do, toe the line; In the strength that God provides, toe the line
There's grace upon grace when you fail; But do all you can to prevent it

And then last . . .

7. **Work hard (v6)**

[6] *It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.*

It's a reference I think, to how God designed the church to provide for pastors

Just as we are to *tithe* our firstfruits, our first share (Prov 3:9-10), pastors are to receive
them; Or at least a *portion* of them to live in the middle of their community

Neither rich nor poor (Prov 30:8-9)

But that's only the case, if you work *hard*

It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

It is the *hard*-working pastor who ought to be well compensated

- Your work ethic should never be in question; The time and effort you put into preaching
and leading and learning and growing, should be completely above reproach
That doesn't mean you have to open and close the *office* every day; Or be at every
ministry event; Or do all the work; Or abstain from vacations
It simply means that you should give yourself *fully* to the work of ministry, to the best
of your ability
Maximizing your time and effort, without neglecting your health and family

7 charges, as you enter this new phase of ministry and new stage of life
7 admonitions that will lead to glad tidings of great joy, both in you, and in your church

- And Paul caps it off in v7, saying – *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you
understanding in everything. (Summary)*
Paul couldn't possibly highlight all the ways these things applied in Timothy's ministry,
and neither can I
But I'm confident that if you keep them in the forefront of your mind, thinking them
over and considering their importance . . .
God will give you understanding to fulfill your calling and lead your church; Amen
