

September 15, 1841 Prof. Finney's Charge

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney charges the newly ordained ministers to preach the whole gospel, live for one object, and stay focused on their work, while avoiding divisions and being men of prayer and deep thought.

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 12:2, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 4:2, James 5:16, 1 Peter 5:2-3

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "Preaching The Gospel"

Description

Charles Finney delivers a charge to new ministers, emphasizing the importance of preaching the whole gospel in balance, living with a singular focus, and working towards unity within the Church. He urges them to address sin thoroughly rather than superficially, to rely on prayer and deep thought, and to avoid seeking ecclesiastical power. Finney stresses the need for humility, the importance of being open to criticism, and the necessity of remaining dedicated to their calling without distraction. He encourages them to be diligent workmen, exemplifying Christ in all aspects of their lives.

Transcript

The following is a Skeleton of the Charge delivered by Prof. Finney, at the Ordination on the 24th ult. We wrote it from memory, not being in a condition to take notes at the time.

1. We charge you to preach the whole gospel, and in its proper proportions. Some neglect important parts of the gospel altogether--others make a hobby of some particular truth--and if men become Christians at all under their preaching, they are monsters. Preach the whole gospel, and in such proportions as is calculated to secure the most perfect symmetry of Christian character.
2. We charge you to live for but one object.
3. We charge you to aim at healing the division in the Church. Do nothing unnecessarily to increase the bitterness and heart-burnings that now exist among Christians--but do all in your power to sweeten and heal them.
4. We charge you, not to heal the hurt of the Church slightly. Do not, on the plea of peace, cover up sin, and thus leave the sores to fester instead of heal. Thoroughly probe them to the bottom, and then they can be soundly cured. Aim at the eradication of all sin; and rest not till the Church is 'made whole of whatever disease she has.'

5. We charge you to be men of prayer. Do not go to your work in your own strength. Do not depend upon your discipline, your talents, nor any thing else, but upon Christ. Live in constant communion with Him, and derive your very life and all your strength from Him.

6. We charge you to be men of deep thought. In this age of the world you can never succeed, and do any good, unless you think deeply, think consecutively, think right.

7. We charge you, not to expect your office to give you permanent influence. The time was, when a minister was greatly respected on account of his office; but that time has passed away. If you depend upon your office for influence, men will be quick to see it and despise you. Nothing but a fearless, faithful, meek, and humble discharge of the duties of your office ought, and nothing else will give you influence. See to it that you deserve, and on that condition only, have influence.

8. We charge you, not to grasp at ecclesiastical power. Your business is to preach the gospel--to win souls to Christ--to present to the Church her great inheritance. You have nothing to do with ecclesiastical power. It is a dangerous weapon. Be careful how you seek for or try to use it.

9. We charge you to avoid censoriousness. The very fact that you go from this School, and this Association, will make many look upon you with distrust, some perhaps oppose you. You will be tempted to feel and speak censoriously to and of them, and thus grieve the Spirit of Christ and wound your own soul. Be on your guard here. Never suffer yourselves to feel, and then you will never speak censoriously.

10. We charge you, not to be diverted from your work. You have been called and educated to preach the gospel. Do not turn aside from this to some other work. Abide in the calling wherein ye are called. Continue to preach the gospel.

11. We charge you to give a candid attention to the remarks of those opposed to you. They may teach you many things in regard to your real faults. These you should be anxious to know and correct. And your enemies may often speak of deficiencies or faults, which the partiality of your friends will overlook. Take advantage of all such circumstances, without regard to the motives of those who make the remarks.

12. We charge you, in all things to show yourselves workmen needing not to be ashamed. Be sure, that in every thing, your studies, your devotions, your preaching, your intercourse with your people, your business, the management of your families--your study to "commend yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." [In this connection, Mr. Finney said, he had been greatly encouraged in his intercourse with the members of the Senior Class, while under his instruction. They did not seem to him to suppose themselves to know half as much as when they began their studies. They seemed to feel their ignorance, and to be willing to acknowledge it. This had greatly interested and encouraged him. He hoped they would cherish the same willingness to be taught, and avoid all dogmatism, and exhibitions of self-sufficiency.] Be examples in every thing--be "living epistles, known and read of all men"--in a word, in every thing, study to show yourselves workmen, needing not to be ashamed.

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