

What Is Our Charge?

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung's sermon emphasizes the importance of fulfilling God's charge to bear the testimony of Jesus and the need for a unifying vision within the church community.

Duration: 40:53

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Deuteronomy 1:8, Proverbs 29:18, Luke 24:27, 1 Timothy 1:18, Revelation 1:9, Revelation 1:17-18

Topics: "Faithful Obedience", "Gods Calling"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of reflecting on the charge and vision God has given to His people, drawing parallels from biblical figures like Abraham and Moses who were entrusted with specific tasks. It urges believers to have a unifying vision centered on bearing the testimony of Jesus, highlighting the significance of being faithful to God's calling and not compromising in the face of challenges or distractions.

Transcript

This charge, my child Timotheus, I commit to thee according to the prophecies as to thee preceding in order that thou might war by them, the good warfare. Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, as we continue in thy presence, we want to remove our shoes because we are thy bond servants.

Lord, what thou hast to say to us, speak thy servants hearing. In thy name we pray. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, I'd like to do something different. I'm not going to preach. I want to have a heart-to-heart talk with you.

My heart is open to you. Whether your hearts are open or not, I don't know. God knows.

But I do feel it is time that we really have a heart-to-heart talk. About two weeks ago, as I was meditating before the Lord, the word charge came to me. We know that Paul, after he was released from his Roman imprisonment, he traveled around to revisit those places that he had labored before.

And he wanted to cover some new areas. In a sense, he was in a hurry. So when he went to Ephesus, left Ephesus, he left Timothy behind.

But the work was not done yet, was not finished yet. So he gave charge to Timothy. And this word charge impressed my heart.

When God created man, he gave man a charge, even though he has provided everything in the Garden of Eden. And yet it did not mean that God wanted man to be idle. So he gave charge to man.

And as you read chapter 2, verse 18, God's charge to man was to till and to guard. They were to till the ground, to make it more productive. And they were to guard the garden, because the garden had no wall, and there was enemy outside.

So God committed this duty to man, to till and to guard. But unfortunately, man failed in the commitment. Then we find God called Abraham.

God gave Abraham a charge. This was recorded in Acts chapter 7, verse 1, and also repeated in Genesis chapter 12, 1. God charged him to leave his native land and his kindred and to go to the place where God will lead him. That was the charge to Abraham.

In carrying out that charge, we know the history, how there were ups and downs in the life of Abraham until finally he kept the charge of God. And then we also remember Israel, how the children of Israel were in the land of captivity in Egypt. But God sent Moses to lead him out of captivity and to bring him into the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The charge was given, and we know the story. When Moses led the children of Israel through 38-some years of wandering, they came back to the east side of the border of Canaan. And there Moses gave this book called Deuteronomy.

It was a restating of the charge because the children of Israel, that first generation, they came to the border of the promised land, but they failed to go in. And now they were again at the border of Canaan, and Moses encouraged them to go in and possess their possession. Now brothers and sisters, what made me think of these things? Because of 40 years.

40 years ago, that's where we first began. So I would like to share with you some of the past histories in order that we may really be before the Lord and consider the charge that God has given us. It was in the 1960s, 1960s, where there was a conference called Wabana Conference.

Now it is called Wabana Conference because the conference was in that place between three cities, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Annapolis. So it is Wabana. And this conference began with the thought of a brother whom I knew very well.

He is now with the Lord. He was thinking of bringing people together, those who knew T. Austin Sparks, and those who knew Devon Frumke, and those who knew myself. So he wanted to bring these people together.

And that's the beginning of the Wabana Conference. Every summer there was such a conference. And Brother Sparks, Brother Frumke, and myself were the speakers.

The conference place was not a very good one. But the spirit was good. And during one of the Wabana Conferences, two sisters coming from Richmond, they were active in the charismatic movement.

You remember the 60s is the time of the charismatic movements. And they came to Wabana Conference. They heard something they had never heard before.

They were challenged by the Lord. And they were changed. So when they returned to Richmond, one of the sisters invited Brother Chase, who started this conference, to come for a visit.

And it was through Brother Chase, I was introduced to the sister. So 40 years ago, she invited me to come to her home. And we had a weekend.

Those who attended were mainly sisters. If I can remember, only two brothers. One was her husband, and the other was another friend.

So I visited this home occasionally. But then she asked me if I can come every month. So I came once a month, a weekend.

And we had time together. Again, they were mostly sisters. But gradually, some young brothers heard of it, and they began to come.

And I know that some of the young brothers are now here, not as young brothers anymore. So when Wabana Conference came to an end, in 1973, I suggested to the little group that was meeting in the sisters' home, whether we should have a conference, a small one, in Richmond. And we all felt good about it.

So in 1973, we had the first conference. Now later on, it became the family conference. But during the first two, it wasn't a family conference.

It was just a conference. I remember during that conference, we met at River Road in the Episcopalian diocesan center. They could only accommodate 70 people, but we met about 100.

Even Franke and myself were the speakers. Then we had the second conference in 74. Lance Lambert of England was invited to come.

If I may say that, that's the year that our brother was buried. Now after the conference, I suggested to the brothers and sisters, just a small group, whether there is the need of a testimony of Jesus in the city of Richmond. Now I do not mean that there are no churches in Richmond.

We find Richmond is a city of churches. I do not mean there were no Christians. There were lots of Christians around.

But whether there is a testimony of Jesus, a corporate testimony, an expression of that testimony, and that is something that God has revealed to us. So finally, we decided we'll pray about it. And after prayer, we felt God's need of it.

But instead of remaining in a sister's home, we feel it should come out of their sister's home. And not only that, but the brothers should be in responsibility. There were three sisters at that time who were in responsibility.

And they were so gracious. They were willing to step back and support the young brothers. So that's how we first began in 1974.

We didn't have a place of our own. We moved around several places until finally the Lord located us in this place. Forty years is a long time.

But thank God, because we felt there was a charge upon us. Therefore, we felt we met together for that purpose. The Lord began to increase.

And not only that, but when we came to the 80s, beginning of the 80s to the middle of the 80s, I think in this country, there were other places that had the same burden for the testimony of Jesus. And I think it was 1985 that we came together and we went through some of the subjects such as who are we, why do we gather together, and so forth. Thank God, through the years we felt we were blessed.

The Lord was leading us all. We were learning. But the enemy was unhappy with us.

And because of that, he stood at the very center of our meeting, a group, with seven of the responsible brothers left. As I look back, I think the reason for that is jealousy. But thank God, by his grace, we continue on.

And the enemy's work was not done yet. So again, we have another break. And again, it was from the center.

It was over a matter of the teaching and doctrine of the Word of God. We felt there was some errors in certain teachings. And yes, some felt they wanted to introduce that teaching to our midst.

And because of this controversy, again, we had a second break. And after we had gone through two breaks, we were so weakened spiritually that we began to compromise. That's my feeling.

Instead of being faithful to what the Lord has entrusted us, instead of being one with the same vision, we become a mixed multitude. To me, I feel we come into the situation in the book of Judges. Everyone does what he seems right in his own sight with good intention.

But there was no unifying vision. Brothers and sisters, I want to be very frank with you. I feel that that is where we are.

We are no longer a people with vision, with that unifying vision. If today I shall ask you, what is our vision? I believe we will have a number of answers. Some may feel the vision for this, and other may feel the vision of that.

And we all try to be faithful. What we consider is our vision. But there is no unifying vision.

Remember what the wisest of men, Solomon said in Proverbs? Where there is no vision, singular number, the people disintegrate. Or some say the people perish. It is of absolute necessity that we have a unifying vision.

Because we human beings, we all have our own ideas. How can we be together as one? What really brings us together as one? Not just outwardly, but inwardly. We are one.

Now how? The secret is in vision. You need to have one unifying vision that you may go together with all your hearts. That you may sacrifice your own thoughts, lay down your own thoughts, and be together as one, and press on.

Because there is a vision that unifies us, and it is worthwhile. Thank God he gives charges to people. Some people may have the charge from the Lord for evangelism.

Thank God for that. I remember when Billy Graham had his crusade in New York. We all went there to serve as counselors, even though we felt we couldn't join in, because that organization included even modernists, people who did not believe in the Bible.

But nevertheless, we all went to be counselors, to help. But brothers and sisters, what is the vision that starts this meeting? We do not despise evangelism, because this is the first step. Without evangelism, there can be no discipleship.

And without discipleship, there can be no church. But brothers and sisters, why are we here? I ask myself this question, and I want to humbly ask every brother and sister who are meeting with us to ask himself or herself the same question. We are nobody, just a small group.

There is nothing to boast of. But if we have a mission, if we have a vision, there is something worthwhile. For us to go on, and even to pay whatever cost it may be.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want to be just existing here. There is no meaning to that. If it doesn't mean something to the Lord, why should we be here? We want to be something to the Lord himself.

We want to give ourselves to that, that the Lord's purpose for our gathering together may be fulfilled. We are not just going for numbers. We want to be those who have vision.

The vision that unites us, a people without vision merely exists. But a people with vision is costly. Are we willing to pay the cost? Are we willing to lay down our own preference? Are we willing to bear the cross and follow the Lord? Brothers and sisters, after 40 years, I think it is time for us to reflect.

Otherwise, we are wasting our life. Let me tell you what the Lord in the beginning, the vision that God has given us. The vision is very simple.

It is to bear the testimony of Jesus. This is the charge that God has given to the church. What is the mission of the church? The mission of the church is to bear the testimony of Jesus.

The Lord said, I will build my church upon this rock and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The Lord is building his church upon himself. What he has built is an expression of what he is.

And it is the charge, the vision of the church to bear the testimony of Jesus. We declare that he is Lord. He is in charge of us.

We have no opinion of our own. We want to do everything that he calls us and nothing that he has not called for the testimony of Jesus. That's what it is.

And as you read history, church history, you find how the saints throughout the ages suffer for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. The apostle John was exiled through that very reason. He told us in Revelation chapter 1 for the test, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus.

But then God is worthy. Our Lord himself has laid down his own life for that testimony. And we are supposed to carry on.

The whole Bible is the testimony of Jesus. Do you remember when our Lord was raised from the dead? He's talked with the two brothers who were so disappointed they left Jerusalem on their way to Emmaus. And yet the Lord took the whole Bible and explained to them how the word speaks of him.

How he revealed, how he revived their sunken hearts. And the same he did with the disciples gathering in Jerusalem from Deuteronomy, the law, the psalm, the prophets. Brothers and sisters, this is the testimony of Jesus.

He himself testified, I'm the first and I'm the last. I'm the living one. I was dead, but I was living and living forevermore.

And had the keys of death and of Hades. That's the testimony. And that is the vision that we had from the very beginning.

So dear brothers and sisters, I feel we are at the crossroad. I think it is time for us as a people to review and to be very honest before the Lord. Where do we want to go? Why do we meet together? What is the purpose that we are here? We do not want to waste our time anymore because the coming of the Lord is imminent.

We are going to see him very soon, sooner than we think. How are we going to answer him? So dear brothers and sisters, I want to expose myself and I want to lay this whole matter before you all. I hope you don't take it lightly.

I hope you are serious about it. Look at our time of worship. Where are the praises and the worship? I noticed that people even do not sing anymore.

Not to sing. Offer praises. We have fallen.

The Lord have mercy upon us. I think it is time for us to wake up. Not to go on as usual because this is an unusual time.

I think it tests us to the very uttermost. Let's be honest before the Lord. Are we willing to pay every cost, any cost, lay down ourselves, our own petty subjects, and allow the Lord to get through among us for the testimony of Jesus.

That's the burden of my heart. Forgive me if I'm too bold, but I want to be honest with you. May we have some prayer.

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