The OPC Form of Government 23.11 requires after the installation of a pastor, “Solemn charges in the name of God shall then be given to the newly installed pastor and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties, and they shall both, by prayer, be commended to the grace of God and his holy keeping.”

1.

Introduction

1.

Method. As I considered what charge to give to the newly-installed pastor and elders, men with great gifts and manifest godliness, I had to ask, “Who am I to give this charge?” I have little to offer you—except by ministering God’s word, in which is found the riches of salvation in Jesus Christ. After all, this must be not only *my* method, but also *yours*. Minister God’s word, and you are rich. Minister yourselves, and you are poor. But by standing on the word of God you will be “
mighty in the scriptures
” (
Acts 18:24
).

2.

Text

1.

Many portions of God’s word would be appropriate for this charge: Ezekiel 34’s exhortation to love, lead, feed, heal, correct and restore God’s sheep, or Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, calling you to “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood
” (
Acts 20:28

). Peter's exhortations for elders to be humble, gentle, self-sacrificial shepherds and overseers would also be wholly appropriate. And in fact "
All scripture is...useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully equipped for every good work
" (
2 Tim. 3:16, 17
). But as I considered that Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders forms the seed which came into full bloom in Paul's later letters to Timothy who was the Ephesians' pastor, it became clear which passage I should choose.

2.

I commend to you the books of 1 & 2 Timothy. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians are intended to teach a congregation how to receive the ministry of a pastor; Paul's letters to Timothy are intended to teach a pastor and elders how to minister to a congregation. Make use of these books to guide you as you begin and continue ministering in this congregation. Let them guide and correct you, encourage you in God's blessings on your work and warn you of the destructive power of men's sin. Turn to 1 Timothy for the *foundations* of your ministry. Turn to 2 Timothy for the *revival* of your ministry. Tonight is the night, and this year is the year, to lay the *foundations* of your ministry, so let us give attention only to 1 Timothy tonight.

3.

Body

1.

Chapter 1 teaches *you have a charge to minister the gospel of Christ*, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners
" (
1 Tim. 1:15
). "
The law is good, if one uses it lawfully....in accordance with the glorious gospel
" (
1 Tim. 1:8, 11

). Paul says, "
This charge I entrust to you
" (
1 Tim. 1:18
). Use the law to correct men's sin, the gospel to save them from sin, to achieve "
the aim of our charge...love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith
" (
1 Tim. 1:5
).

2.

Chapter 2 teaches that "therefore" (**1 Tim. 2:1**) *you must lead God's people in prayer*—prayer for all men, for their peace and salvation, "
for there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all
" (
1 Tim. 2:5, 6
). How will men be saved unless you lead them in prayer?

3.

Chapter 3 teaches *you must train up, evaluate, and ordain new elders and deacons*, that the church will continue to serve as "
the pillar and buttress of truth
" in society (
1 Tim. 3:15
). In practical terms, God's word in elders is the "
pillar
," God's deeds in deacons is the "
buttress
," of the truth of the gospel in the church and this world. Do you want this church to have a solid structure built on the foundation of Jesus Christ? Do you want it to defeat the kingdom of darkness in this place? Then you must raise up officers. You must raise up new officers, however long that takes.

4.

Chapter 4 teaches *you must wage war against false doctrine and practice*. You are an officer in a war. A lethal threat comes from apostates (
vv. 1-5
), but you must gain victory over it in yourself (

vv. 6-10
), and in those whom you must “
Command and teach these things
” (
v. 11
). Train yourself “
in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed....train yourself for godliness
” (
vv. 6, 7
). “
Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity....devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching
” (
vv. 12, 13
). “
Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers
” (
v. 16
).

5.

Chapter 5 teaches *you must build the bonds of love in the church*. Encourage and honor each member according to their station and place in life. “
Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity
” (
vv. 1, 2
). Take a special concern for the care of widows and the honor of elders.

6.

Chapter 6 teaches *you must be faithful to the end - until Christ comes*. Your greatest and final inheritance is not in this world, but in Him. “
Flee
” from “
the love of money
” to the “
great gain in godliness with contentment
” (
vv. 2-10
). “

11 Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, 14 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time- he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.
" (
vv. 11-16
)

7.

Conclusion. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified
" (
Acts 20:32
).