

Prestonwood Connection

Ordination Service

A Charge To Keep

Proverbs 4:23

May 10, 2006 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, A Charge To Keep]

The Pittsburgh Steelers beat the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl 40 and became the Word Champions a..., there are a number of things that a..., that came to play, that came to bear in the great victory for the Pittsburgh Steelers. And of course, all of that is now something that has been put in the history books, but of all the things that you could look at, including the score, 21 to 10, that was placed in the history books for Super Bowl 40, the one thing that may often be overlooked, but that is an essential part of winning and especially when it comes to the game of football, is something called time of possession. How much time did each team have possession of the football, because time of possession is often the direct and most significant contributing factor to the outcome of a game. And as it turns out in Super Bowl 40, the Pittsburgh Steelers had the ball almost 8 minutes longer than the Seattle Seahawks and as a result they made something happen. And, of course what time of possession is in the NFL, to a large degree, rebounds and ball control are in the NBA. Last night...last night the San Antonio Spurs were Mav handled, heh, they were Mav handled down in San Antonio, because the Mavs went down there, they had a great strategy for the game and offensively and defensively they took control of the ball, took control of the court, they made things happen. And so to a large degree in any significant competition, everything rises and falls with those who have the ball and know what to do with it.

And to a large degree to the 4 men that I'm speaking to tonight, that is the issue at hand for you. What I'm saying to you tonight is simply this, the ball is in your hands, the ball is in your court. And this is a day and this is an hour and this is a moment where we come tonight to recognize that you have received something much greater than a ball, you have received a trust and that trust is a sacred trust from God. And tonight it is my opportunity and it is my challenge to you, to help you see and to seize this moment and to do everything that you can for the glory and the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. But what I'm saying tonight to these 4 men, them being very much the focus and the object of what we're talking about tonight, I really say to each and to every one of us tonight, because this is our hour, this is our generation, this is our moment to be faithful and to be found faithful to the call of God upon our lives and to the witness of Christ in this generation. And so what I want to speak to us about tonight is simply this, *A Charge To Keep...A Charge To*

Keep. And I want us to read together as our key verse tonight Proverbs, chapter 4 and verse 23...Proverbs, chapter 4 and verse 23. I've said to these men you have the ball, I've said to each of us that we are to be found faithful, but if we're going to be faithful in this generation, if we're going to do the work of the ministry, if we're going to lift up the name of Jesus Christ and if we're gonna penetrate a culture that is without God and that is without the gospel, the only way that we can do that is by the work of Christ being real, living and vibrant in us, His church. God has not left His church without power, but in fact He's said, Jesus Himself, in the book of Acts: [1:8]

You will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses, ~~in Judeah~~...in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the utter most parts of the earth.

And that mission and that mobilization is still going on in the church of Jesus Christ. But if we're going to be faithful to fulfill that calling then we have to understand how we guard the charge that has been given to us. How are we to keep that which has been given to us? Well, we've been studying the book of Proverbs, we've just started a new sermon series on Sundays in the book of Proverbs called *Smart Homes, Wise Families*. And as we look at the book of Proverbs tonight we're going to find that the very same wisdom that is given for family life, I believe is given for ministry, for ministers of the gospel and tonight it is my prayer that you will understand how to keep the charge that God has for you. Proverbs, chapter 4 in verse 23 says this:

Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of the heart flow the issues of life.

Or literally:

...for out of it spring the issues of life.

Keep your heart with all diligence,...

And if there is anything that is essential for a minister of the gospel, seeking to live and to be faithful to Christ in this day and in this hour, it is that we must give attention to keeping our heart. I like the way that a..., there's a little bit different emphasis in the New International Version, it says this:

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

It is the primary thing, it is the priority thing to give attention to and to keep your focus on the condition and the well being of your heart. Now we certainly know that this is true physically, right? You can be buff, you can be cut, you can have bulging biceps, you can have 6 pack abs, but if your heart is somehow unhealthy, then your body and your life is in jeopardy. It doesn't matter what you look like on the outside, the most important thing about you and about me is what is the condition of my body

on the inside and in particular at the core of my being, what is the condition of my heart.

A recent *Reader's Digest* issue provided a compilation of analysis on some diets and diet trends that are effecting our culture and cultures of the world. And they found as a result of this study that Japanese people and the Japanese culture eat a lot of fish, a very little bit of fat and they have fewer heart attacks than people in the United States or Great Britain. But on the other hand, they discovered that the French eat a lot of fat and cream in their diet and still suffer fewer heart attacks than the US and the British. And then they studied the Italians and learned that they drink a lot of red wine and they have a lower risk of heart problems than their western neighbors. So what was the result of the study? Well, it is this, they concluded from all these facts that you can eat whatever you want, but speaking English will kill you. Heh! [pause for congregation laughter] Well, I don't know about that study, but what I know is this, is that the condition of your heart has everything to do with the well being of your life. And so to you 4 men I say tonight, guard your heart, keep your heart. If you wanna keep the charge that has been given to you then here is the core and the essence of the issue, guard your heart.

Keep your heart with all diligence...

Now, what does it mean to keep our heart? **HOW DO WE KEEP OUR HEART FOR CHRIST** and for the work for which we've been called in this day and in this hour. Well, again, I think Solomon is the one who gives us the prescription, who gives us the layout, who give us the assignment to know what to do and to know how to do it. So if we're going to keep our heart for ministry. Let me just point you to several things that you must keep.

And the first one is found in Proverbs, chapter 1 and verse 7...Proverbs, chapter 1 and verse 7 the Bible teaches us in this passage of Scripture that if we are going to keep our heart then we must **KEEP A REVERENT HEART**...keep a reverent heart men, but what I say to these men I say to all of you as my brothers and sisters in Christ tonight. If you wanna keep your heart one of the things that you've got to guard is that you have a reverent heart. What does Proverbs 1:7 say?

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

If there's one thing that is essential to anyone and everyone who's to be found faithful to Christ it is an attitude of reverence for the things of God. We live in a day where it is common and where it is even encouraged that we would somehow trivialize the things of God. And one of the things that is so very important for those of us who are in the ministry, it is that we must be careful to guard our heart and to maintain a sense of true and genuine reverence towards God and that we would not allow ourselves to let the familiarity that we have with things that are spiritual cause us to trivialize the things that are important with God. My pastor, Dr.

Adrian Rogers said on so many occasions:

"One of the easiest places to backslide is in a seminary classroom with a Bible on the desk and a theology book on the shelf."

We become so accustomed to the things of God, we get so used to them that we begin to trivialize them, we begin to downplay them, we even begin to...to kind of become puffed up with our knowledge and...and what we know and what we have and the result of all of this is that ultimately we lose our sense of awe and of reverence for God. Men guard your heart; keep a heart of reverence towards God. Don't let anything or anyone cause you to become a man who is cynical and therefore who begins to trivialize God and subject His Word and His work to your judgments and to your thoughts and to your education and to your abilities. It's not about those things, it's about the fear of God and if you don't fear God you don't have any business serving the Lord Jesus Christ, because one day you will give an account to God for your life, for your faith and for your ministry. Paul said to Timothy, pay attention to yourself, pay attention to your doctrine, for your sake and for those who hear you. Be a man who fears God. But let me say that to all of us tonight, how important it is that we understand that wisdom and knowledge is directly connected to our personal sense of the fear of God. In the Old Testament, the priests who ministered in the temple were set apart for the work and the service of the ministry of things that were holy things and do you know from Old Testament survey, from Old Testament studies guys, do you know what they wore on their vestments, what it said when the priests was in the temple? Holy to the Lord. And tonight what we are marking is that you are set apart, you are not a priest in the Old Testament sense, Jesus is our priest, but you have a priestly work before the people of God and God's standard for you as a minister of the gospel is heightened, just as it was in the Old Testament that you are to live a life set apart for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and living out a life of holiness in the fear of God. That is an attitude that is lacking in the church today, but it is the fear of God that will give you wisdom and that will give you knowledge and that will make you effective for the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Keep a reverent heart.

Next, **KEEP A HUNGRY HEART**...a hungry heart. Turn over just a few pages from Proverbs, chapter 1 to Proverbs, chapter 2 and we'll begin reading in just a moment verse 6, because here I'm not only talking about the attitude that you bring to ministry, I'm talking about the appetite that you have. Now, part of your job as a minister of the gospel, well really there are 3 things, you're to lead, you're to feed and you're to intercede, those are the 3 things that we learn in Peter, that we're to lead the flock, we're to feed the flock and we're to intercede for the flock. And so you are to be a shepherd, you are to be a minister. By the way, do you all know what they call ministers in Germany? They call them German Shepherds, I didn't know if you all knew that or not, but I just wanted to be sure you did. You're shepherds and as shepherds you are to be faithful in leading, feeding and interceding, but if you are going to feed the flock then you must be fed and the food of your life, the appetite of your life and of

your ministry is to be today and always the Word of God. Listen to Proverbs 2, beginning in verse 6:

⁶For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; ⁷He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; ⁸He guards the paths of justice, And ~~preverbs~~... preserves the way of His saints.

¹⁰When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, ¹¹Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, ¹²To deliver you from the way of evil,...

The Word of God, it is the strength of your life, it is the sustenance of your ministry, it is the satisfaction of all who hear you and who sit under your preaching and teaching. What people need is the Word and today it's become so common to substitute other things for the Word, methodologies and cultural relevancy, but it's always got to be a ministry that is built on the foundation of the Word of God and your partaking of the Word of God. Be a Word driven man, be a Word driven Christian who has a hunger and a desire to hear the Word of God. Jesus said in Matthew 4 in verse 4:

... "...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

And if you're going to keep the charge that's been given to you then you've got to keep, you've got to maintain, you've got to guard the fact that you have a hungry heart and then as you are fed, you in turn will be able to feed others with strength and with sustenance.

I heard about a pastor who, in a new building they had installed a..., some of those a..., a..., hand-dryers in the bathrooms. And they put the hand-dryers in there, but about 2 weeks after they occupied the new building the pastor asked that they take em out. And one of the engineers who was involved in the design and the setup of the building said well pastor is it that they're not working and you unhappy with them? He said a..., no, he said, really it's not any of those things, he said, it was just that when I walked in the bathroom the other day I noticed that there was a little sign that said, "Push button for a sample of next weeks sermon." Heh! The hot air, a lack of substance. Never let it be said of you that you're just hot air. Do the work, get in the kitchen, bake the bread and give people the Word of God and you will fill their hearts and fill their lives with strength and sustenance.

Then the Bible says that we must **KEEP A PURE HEART**. Not only to keep a reverent heart and to keep a hungry heart for the Word of God, but keep a pure heart, Proverbs 5 beginning in verse 15. This talks about your affections and in particular men, I just want to remind you that one of the grave and great dangers of ministry is to let your affections move away from the things that God has prescribed and that God has outlined in His Word. Listen to what the Bible says to you and to me about our most

intimate of all relationships, our relationship with our wives. It says:

¹⁵*Drink water from your own cistern...*

Beginning in verse 15:

...from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷Let them be ~~your~~ only your own, And not for strangers with you. ¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth.

The Bible says that God has a standard for those of us who are called to ministry and it is that we are to be men of purity, morally and spiritually and when it comes to the relationships of life, you cannot live in an immoral relationship outside of marriage and you need to live in a faithful relationship inside of marriage. Paul made it clear with Timothy, that if a man was to live and to serve in the ministry that his life and his marriage was to conform to the plan and the purpose of God; one man, with one woman for life. And I say to you men tonight, give attention to the relationship that you have with your wife. Now, not each of these men are married. Probably each of them will be, one other is in the process of getting married in July this summer, two of them are. But I just say to you it is so important that purity is a part of your life and of your ministry, purity of devotion to your wife. Never sacrifice your marriage for your ministry. Never sacrifice your marriage for your ministry, that is unbiblical. Seek to build a marriage where two people who are real people with real challenges and a real heart and a growing faith, live out their faith in service and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't let your ministry compete with your marriage, let it compliment your marriage. Let your marriage compliment your ministry and together as you grow in grace as a couple, grow in love and the ability to share that love with others. I guess what I'm trying to say to you tonight guys, is don't let your marriage be something that's ornamental for your ministry. This isn't some add-on, this isn't just something that you need to have to be a..., in the ministry, this is a vital part of who God has made and what God wants to do in and through your life and it's what He's doing in your heart together as a couple and so the Bible says pay attention to your marriage, pay attention to your family, pay attention to the priorities that God has put before you and let me say to your wives how important it is for you to give encouragement, to give support, to give help and most importantly to give prayer to these men. They need an intercessor who walks with them, who prays with them, who shares with them, who makes the journey of life with them. And always count it an honor and a privilege that God has called you alongside someone that He has called to give themselves to Him. Men, pay attention to your marriage.

I love the fact that it talks about a..., drinking water from your own cistern, that's not sister, it's cistern. It's the idea of a well and I simply say to you, water your marriage. I've said this many times the grass isn't greener on this side of the fence or that side of the fence, it's greener where you water it. Water your home, water your marriage and

God will bless you.

Next, **KEEP A BELIEVING HEART**...keep a believing heart. So many of us in this room know and love this passage of Scripture. Proverbs 3:5 and 6:

⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean unto your own understanding; ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will direct your paths.

Do you know that there are many unbelieving ministers? I don't mean that they're lost because they haven't believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are some of those, but there are far more who have lost their faith and lost their confidence and they've become faint of heart. Time and time again I wanna challenge you to go back to this passage of Scripture and to maintain a believing heart. What does the Bible promise? God promises us guidance, God promises us grace and God promises us that He will use us to His glory. That's what He promises, guidance, grace and glory.

Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, And do not lean to your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him,...

Just keep acknowledging Him, keep doing what you do, trusting His guidance, relying on His grace, focusing on His glory and in all your ways He will direct your path, He will see you through. It's so easy as I've mentioned earlier to become skeptical and cynical and ungrateful in ministry. What is it that keeps the attitude and the focus and the aim and the ambition of ministry bright? It's a believing heart. Without faith it's impossible to please God, it's a believing heart. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon wisely said: [Proverbs 12:25]

Anxiety in the heart of a man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.

He also said in Proverbs 13:12:

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

There're gonna be days where hope is deferred. There're gonna be days when anxiety weighs you down. There're gonna be times when you feel boxed in limited a..., when you feel as though you're not doing all that you could do or should do. What do you do?

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, don't lean on your own understanding and in all your days acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.

I have and keep in my devotional book, my journal, this little poem and I love it, it says this.

*The will of God will never take you,
Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
And the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,
And where the power of God cannot endow you.*

*The will of God will never take you,
Where the Spirit of God cannot work through you,
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,
Where the army of God cannot protect you,
Where the hands of God cannot mold you,*

*The will of God will never take you,
Where the love of God cannot enfold you,
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,
Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,
And where the authority of God cannot overrule you.*

*The will of God will never take you,
Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,
And where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.*

Keep a believing heart, wherever, whatever, however.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, don't lean on your understanding,
in all your ways acknowledge Him, He will direct your paths.*

One final word, **KEEP A SOUL WINNERS HEART**...keep a soul winning heart.
Solomon wisely said in Proverbs 11:30:

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.

...he who wins souls is wise.

It begins with the fear of the Lord, but it ends with the practice of winning people to Christ and though the church has many different tasks, the church and the Christian minister only has one defining mission, winning people to Jesus Christ and getting them fit for eternity. He who wins souls is wise and I say to your men tonight, give yourself to the one mission and the one message of the church of Jesus Christ, it is the message of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ. Men today as they have through all generations have one need and that is to be saved. The critical issue of this hour is salvation that people would be brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Who's going to do that? Who's gonna to fulfill that mission? You've been called to do that, I've been called to do that, we've been called to do that and the Bible says he who wins souls is wise. We cannot win souls apart from the essential message of the gospel, it is the message of Christ who is

the Way, the Truth and the Life and our job is to get people to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is working to move them to Jesus, but my job is to open my mouth and to open His Word and to give a living witness of the living Christ and when I do that and when you do that then God does something incredible in the lives of people. Your greatest joys and your greatest heartaches in ministry will relate to people. People will let you down, people will disappoint you, people will stumble and fall, some whom you never thought that would be true. But let me tell you the greatest thing that will happen is that you will have the opportunity if you will give your heart to it time and time again to see people bow their heads and close their eyes and say dear Jesus I am a sinner and Jesus I need to be saved and Jesus I want to be saved, come into my heart dear Jesus, forgive me of my sins, make me the person you want me to be, I believe that You are the Son of God and you're gonna see people do that in your life and they're gonna be changed forever. I've been just far enough ahead of you to know that the most incredible thing about this work is seeing people whose lives were changed forever, not because of me and my ministry, but because God has honored His Word and by His grace He's allowed me to do the greatest, the most precious and the wisest thing in all the world, to win souls for Jesus Christ. That is the charge that you've been given, to keep a reverent heart, to keep a hungry heart, to keep a pure heart for your wife, your family and moral purity in your life, to keep a believing heart and to keep a soul winning heart because this is the charge that is given to you. It was John Wesley who said:

***A charge to keep** I have,
A God to glorify,
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.*

*To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my pow'rs engage
To do my Master's will!*

*Arm me with jealous care,
As in Thy sight to live,
And O Thy servant Lord prepare
A strict account to give!*