

# Charge

## INTRODUCTION:

### New Series Called Charge

- Churchwide Fast: January 14
- Baptism Service: January 28

### Read 2 Timothy 4.1-5

My personal charge: Preach Word

1. Keep on my watch
2. Challenge, warn, and urge your people
3. Don't Ever Quit
4. Keep it simple

### 4 New Year Charges:

#### 2 Timothy Paraphrased:

3-5 You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. But you—keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.

#### Four Charges (Four Sermons):

1. Keep your eyes on what you are doing
2. **Keep the Good with the Bad**
3. Keep the Message Alive
4. Keep Going for God's Glory

**MESSAGE:**

Well some of you have been asking how our puppy Cooper is doing. He seems to be doing well, and we are training him to become a house dog. Unfortunately, he has chewed up a few things. First he loves you. He found the church directory and just poured over it. He just wants to be apart of my life.

Apart of our routine is to wake up, make coffee and a fire around 5:00 AM. I sit on this certain part of the couch next to the fire to drink coffee, pray, read and write in my journal. His job is to eat food and chew on a bone. My job is to write my sermons. A lot of quality time there in the presence of the Lord together. He found my journal and tried to help me one day when I left the room. (Show chewed up journal). Just wants to be apart of my life.

This week during our normal routine, I left the room for a little bit to wake Angie up with her cup of coffee. I came back to sit in my special spot on the couch, and guess who was laying in my spot? The dog. "You are not preaching this Sunday, get down!" He just wants to be apart of my life. So Cooper is becoming quite domesticated in our home. In fact, he has become so domesticated, he hates to go outside in this winter weather. This is Cooper's favorite spot to be in the house. So my duck hunter breed of an adventurous dog is becoming quite domesticated.

The problem is the more I try to make him civilized the less civilized I become. I thought I was a patient person, one who could withstand trial with ease. I thought I could convince Cooper not to eat the walls, the blinds, and the dishwasher with my charming demeanor. Wrong: I yell so much at that animal, the neighbors probably think a barriaran leader stirring up the Pursley warriors to advance and fight a great battle.

**Questions of Faith Domestication:** Is the message of Christianity really about my family's safety and security? Has my faith been tamed as a means only to trust God for his provision to eliminate unnecessary risks? Is God only concerned about my prosperity or is there something more he is after? Is my life difficult and full of challenges because God is not with me anymore? Did Jesus truly endure the barbaric sufferings of the cross so that this life I live will be smooth and free of difficulty?

Something tells me there is more to Jesus and to faith than my personal security and prosperity. Something tells me Jesus' idea of peace has really nothing to do with zero conflict and that faith has more to do with taking great risks. Friends you can't have adventure in faith if you don't have a difficult way to go about you.

**Matthew 7.13-14** (NKJV) "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and **difficult** is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

**Today's Charge: Take the Good with the Bad**

Today I want to take you outside on an adventure of faith and tell the story of a barbarian leader who learned to take the good with the bad. You'll find his difficult road in the book of Judges in chapter 11.

Judges is a book of barbarian leaders who rescued the people of God in times of difficulty. They were given authority to lead before Israel ever had a king. The cycle would go like this: Israel would sin and turn from God, and enemy would attack them. Israel repents and asks God for help, and then he'd send in a barbarc leader to deliver the people of Israel. After great victory and a time of peace, Israel would sin and start again.

**Stand to Read Judges 11.1-6 and pray**

**MESSAGE:**

**Judges 11.1** Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute.

Jephthah was considered by many to be Mighty Warrior or a man of valor, as some of your translations say. Webster's dictionary defines valor as: *strength of mind or spirit that enables a person to encounter danger with firmness : personal bravery.*

The problem he will face amongst his people is that his mother was a prostitute. So he was probably half-Canaanite and not fully Israelite. He was the black sheep of the family. But what you can you do?

**Charge: Take the good with the bad**

Does Jephthah really have a choice who his parents are? Was he a part of that decision? No. Yet here is a man who has strength of mind and spirit in the face of danger, yet he could be defined by his dad's lustful wanderings for the rest of his life.

Did you get to choose who your parents were? Some of you have had multiple fathers or may not know who your parents are. Perhaps your folks made a wreck of things or made some unforgivable and tragic mistakes in your life. Even if you fall in the category of having parents who did it right by you, we still find ourselves evolving as parents ourselves, to try and do it better than they did.

What happens often is that we victimize ourselves by our parents decisions or upbringing. We say, I'm like this because of the injustices my parents performed. I can't become who I dreamed because my parents held me back.

**How do you take the good with the bad in this instance?** Do you have life today; we can start there. Whether you admire your folks or not, they gave you life. It's up to you now what you do with that life. Sometimes those setbacks can even serve to motivate us towards greater things. Even a Boy Named Sue learned to overcome his name and become a man, according to Johnny Cash.

Jephthah may have been the son of a prostitute, but who taught him how to be a man of valor? Here is a guy who takes the good with the bad. It doesn't say he was embarrassed by his father or that he ran away from home as a teenager. Infact well read on to discover that the only one who has a problem with his upbringing is everyone else.

**Here is the truth:** You don't become a life of valor, strong in mind and spirit, one who encounters danger with firmness, by being a victim of your own upbringing. Rather, your upbringing falls victim to your valor.

If this makes Jephthah a barbarian in his own home, then so be it.

**Judges 11.2** Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. "You are not going to get any inheritance in our family," they said, "because you are the son of another woman."

Something tells me the motive behind driving Jephthah away had to do with riches of the inheritance. If he is gone, his share becomes more. So you can tell the type of men his brothers were; men who lacked valor. (Man, between Joseph and Jephthah, there are some real issues with brothers.)

If people are only driven by the comfort of an inheritance or riches, they believe they can buy their way out of difficulties. Most times you can't buy your way out of trouble, you have to fight your way out.

This doesn't say that Jephthah's father died, but we can half-way expect; how else would these brothers feel so bold? So now he probably is estranged from his mother, without his dad, and now without his family. What is he supposed to do?

**Charge: Take the good with the bad.** Does Jephthah really have a choice? He's not welcome at home anymore, he has no stake in his family. What is he supposed to do?

Friends I keep asking this question, "Does he really have a choice?" because this is what I believe: I think the challenges and obstacles that are in your face today, have less to do with the intensity of the inherent problem before you, and has more to do with your lack of options.

I think we fret because we only have one or two choices to make.

- You are diagnosed with a disease. What do you do? Your options are limited.
- You are in a loveless marriage. What do you do? Your options are limited.
- You have not a dollar to your name. What do you do? Your options are limited.
- You are estranged from your own kids. What do you do? Your options are limited.

The positive side to not having a lot of options is it's easier to know what to do. My mom wanted to make some curtain sheers for Pastor Sam's bedroom and do it before Sam arrived; so she went to the pharmacy. As a seamstress she lives and breaths Joann Fabrics but she found less options there--flower patterns or no patterns grey. Being a single young man she said, it was an easy decision.

When options are limited at least you know what to do:

- I have a disease, so now I live to die another day.
- I have a loveless marriage, so now I need to figure out how to put a little love in it.
- I have no money, so I need to go make money.
- I'm estranged from my kids, so I need to go right some wrongs.

**Last week's charge was: Keep your eyes on what you are doing... tend to your own field.** I think Jephthah must live by the same principle of Joseph... "I'm not aloud to live here anymore and

will not be included in my father's inheritance because of my mother. Okay, at least I know my options. I can do this.

**Judges 11.3** So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a gang of scoundrels gathered around him and followed him.

**Here is the truth about valiant men and women:** you can strip them of their home, their family, their livelihood, but you can't strip them of their valor. It's not an easy task to undue strength of mind and spirit. You can relocate them and they draw an army around them.

My texts says scoundrel-- I like that. Yours may say, "adventure." Another version say, "Men of ill repute." Do you get the point? Who are the scoundrels you surround yourself with and get in trouble?

**Proverbs 18.24** One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

I want to talk to all the fellas for a second: Guys no one is worse at having friends than we are.

You might say, "I have friends." What you call friends are the acquaintances that scream at the tv screen with you during a hawks game. I'm talking about a scoundrel. A scoundrel is the one who is standing between you and the guy who wants to beat your face, having their own screaming match.

"I have friends, we tell hunting stories to each other." You can share a hunting story with anyone, you can only share with a scoundrel that there is a lady at work who is crossing lines and hunting you.

"I have friends, we hang out in the van pool or talk on the CB radio." A friend that sticks closer than a brother, his handle is Scoundrel. A scoundrel doesn't communicate with you from your peripheral vision or through a speaker. He looks you in the eye and calls you out! Especially when your wrong.

**Who are your best friends?** Well my wife is my best friend. That is a romantic thing to say. Listen, I am a strong proponent of marriage and the closest thing in the world to me is Angie, but it takes more than a wife to become a man of valor; you need to be surrounded by scoundrels.

Leroy was talking to me the other day about this and said, "If I was put in prison unjustly in a foreign country and was given one phone call, you know who I'd call? Tony Romberg. I said, "that scoundrel?" "Yeah, Tony this is where I am, get me out of here! It may be a 30 second conversation and I may go on being torched, but at least I'd know Tony knew and know he'd find a way."

**Who would you call?** Your wife? You call your wife if you want to say "honey I love you tell the kids I love them" on the phone. You call a scoundrel if you want to go home and tell your family you love them in person. You call a scoundrel if you want to live to fight another day. In fact, a true scoundrel doesn't even wait for your call, he's already has the rest of band of scoundrels planned to do something illegal to get you out of that jam.

Who are the scoundrels around you? I don't know how to have a friend like that? It's simple. You become a scoundrel for someone else. Become a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

### **Judges 11.4-11**

Wouldn't this make a great action movie? All of a sudden, the elders of Gilead can't buy their way out of trouble. A civilized tribe can't lead a fight against an abbaic bully; only an uncivilized tribe can. They lacked valor but they knew where to find some. And now he also has a brigade of scoundrels. This type of guy is exactly what their looking for.

**Charge: The elders of Gilead take the good with the bad.** What a risk! Remember this guys is only half Israelite. His Canaanite side set's him back in his understanding of the law of the Lord. He is a bit scripturally illiterate. **Anyone else like that here?** In fact, his story here is more widely known because of the vow he made to the Lord in haste: if you give me victory over the Ammonites I will sacrifice the first thing that comes out of my house to honor God. Well the first thing that came out of his house was his only daughter. The Law does not permit human sacrifices, but how was he to know? He was a barbarian. There is great debate still to this day of scholars who try to explain what end up happening to his daughter in this story... We'll talk more about that tonight.

**There is a couple of things I learned in coming to forks.** First, this is kind of a barbaric country. This is the last great frontier. I remember one of my first graveside funerals. We had a nice funeral and then we looked at the Port Angeles funeral home and asked them how are they going to lower the casket into the ground. They had no idea, they thought the cemetery had a lift. No problem, the family just got some toe straps and lowered the casket down themselves. It was kind of uncivilized, but it sure felt like valor. Because no one knows how to honor their dead like scoundrels.

Forks is apparently not everyone's cup of tea. I learned this in my youth pastor search. I went to NU in Seattle and posted the position and made and talked to everyone I can think who could get this out of students. The answer I received in return was, "no one here is interested." Really, no one is interested in a full-time youth pastor position, in a great church, with the schools open to ministry, and the once in a lifetime opportunity to serve under me, who also teaches students how to play basketball? What am I missing? But that's okay, Forks requires more than a civilized youth pastor, they need one who is not afraid to take risks. Only an uncivilized youth pastor would travel 4000 miles with a scoundrel without a valid driver's license. Sounds like just the guy we need.

But at some point I believe like Jephthah, the greater Seattle area is going to need an uncivilized church full of scoundrels willing to take risks for the kingdom of God. They'll find us when they need us. In fact they already have. We've attended Men's Conference in Pasco for the past two years. Last year, Forks Assembly of God brought the second biggest group.

This year's theme is Courageous, and they've already asked to record two testimonies of men from this church. They've also asked me to teach one of the few workshops they offer. I call it the Courageous Family. Dave Cole must have seen something in this church and it's pastor last

November that needed to be shared with the brothers at conference. So every scoundrel in this church better get the time off and signed up, because men of this state need us: May 17-19.

## CONCLUSION

**Judges 11.12** Then Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king with the question: "What do you have against me that you have attacked my country?"

This is my favorite part of the story. You see this earlier conversation of, "Will I actually lead you?" is less about Jephthah taking power over his tribe who has forsaken him. He wanted to make sure the intentions, because a barbaric leader needs to know if he can own the problem.

He speaks to the Ammonite King in a way that gives an impression that my country has every confidence in me and I have every confidence in them. He speaks to the king like someone who has no bitterness or resentment locked in his heart for being forsaken by his own tribe. He speaks to the king like a true scoundrel, he stands in front of a victim of bullying, just because bullying is not welcome in this house. He speaks to the king like a mighty warrior, and man of great valor.

As you read on, he tries a civilized approach to the problem through diplomacy and attempts to solve this conflict with sharing history and motives. Jephthah is weighing his options. He knows that approach won't work with bully's. The only reason he takes time for diplomacy is to give them one last chance to recant their aggression. If they don't recant, he will feel a lot better about about laying waste their country. Jephthah is trying to give himself less options, because that's what barbarian do.

**Judges 11.28-29** The king of Ammon, however, paid no attention to the message Jephthah sent him. 29 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites.

There are bully problems everyday and they typically start in school. Bully's pay not attention to diplomacy or programs that attempt to stop bullying in school. They pay no attention to that. Parents I know we want to rescue our kids by stepping in or addressing the school. That only makes it more difficult on our kids. Students the only thing that gets the attention of a bully is a random scoundrel who gets in front of someone who is receiving unwanted attention, looks the bully in the eye and says, "What do you have against me?" It's going to take students to own the problem on behalf of their friends, not teachers or the administration.

**Martin Luther King Jr. said,** "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

The other thing that will own the problem which I believe in, is the power and presence of men on campus. We need watchdog dads, scoundrels who make their presence known. We have a groups in Elementary, but we need them at the Intermediate, Jr High, and Sr. High Level. All it takes is a half-hour before school or 15 minutes after.

We are looking for scoundrels to own this problem on behalf of our students.

Jesus did the same thing- when sin and darkness threatened to destroy the world. He endured the cross to scorn it's shame. Jesus died for all people, even the ones who want nothing to do with him. He did that so that he could look sin, death and the grave in the eye and say, What do you have against me. Jesus owned the cross and its sufferings so we can know salvation.

Friends, God didn't send his one and only son to make things civilized for you. He says, "difficult is the path that leads to life. The only thing God has made easy in this life, is salvation in knowing Jesus.

### **Response Card**

1. I want to choose the road less traveled and follow Jesus
2. I want to learn to take the good with the bad, to have a less domesticated faith
3. I need scoundrels in my life, so I want to become a scoundrel for others