

CFBC Hymns Class 16

Charles Wesley (A Charge to Keep I Have)

Wesley first published this hymn in his *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* in 1762.

A Charge to Keep I Have (edited)

*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 powers 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!*

*Help me to watch and pray,
And on Thyself rely,
And let me ne'er my trust betray,
But press to realms on high.*

A CHARGE TO KEEP I HAVE

Much of life consists of an array of responsibilities we must discharge. Duties the circumstances of life, and our own choices, have thrust upon us. As citizens, we are responsible to abide by the laws of the land. We may also have certain obligations to an employer, and to our family, and more. But if we are Christians, our greatest responsibility is to obey and serve God. The Bible calls on His people to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). Across our land, there are many who have taken up that charge...People of whom it may be said, "From the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24).

To a large extent the law protects our freedom to do that. However, that has not always been the case. One of the most powerful works of God in history was accomplished by the Methodists in England, in the mid-eighteenth century. That was a time when the nation was virtually a spiritual wasteland. There was a coarseness in society, and violence was widespread. Drunkenness was rampant. And with few exceptions, the clergy of the time were part of the problem, not part of the solution. They did no more than was absolutely necessary, preferring to spend their time fox hunting, playing cards, and guzzling alcohol like their parishioners.

Against that tide of immorality God launched the dynamic ministry of John and Charles Wesley. But it was not easy going. The two men often faced strong opposition in their service for Christ. And similar abuse was vented on their converts. It was a costly thing to identify yourself as a follower of Christ in those days. One writer says, "they were outrageously treated--stoned, mauled, ducked [in water until nearly drowned], hounded by bulldogs, threatened, [their] homes looted, businesses ruined. Anyone who walked through a town could pick out, by their ruinous condition, the homes where the Methodists lived."

"Commitment" to serving God back then was far more than a word. It involved the sacrifice of a life upon the altar of sacred duty. One day in 1762, Charles Wesley (1707-1788), was pondering this truth. He read in Scripture of the responsibility assigned to the Levites in Israel to guard the door of the tabernacle. God's command was, "You shall stay at the door of the tabernacle of meeting...and keep the charge of the Lord" (Lev. 8:35). They were to see that no unauthorized person entered, and that nothing offensive to a holy God was done there. Later, the Lord said, "The Levites shall camp around the tabernacle...that there may be no wrath on the congregation...and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle..." (Num. 1:53).

As his meditation continued, Wesley consulted a Bible commentary written by a man named Matthew Henry...

"We have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to serve; and it must be our daily care to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord our Master, who will shortly call us to an account about it, and it is our peril if we neglect it. Keep it 'that ye die not'; it is death, eternal death, to betray the truth we are charged with; by the consideration of this we must be kept in awe."

These words became the basis for Charles Wesley's hymn...A Charge To Keep I Have (Source...WordWise Hymns)

Excerpt from Mere Orthodoxy...

Here's the interesting feature of this song, and of Henry's point...the emphasis on the eternality of the soul and the judgment of God creates pressure to account well for the time and resources that we are given, and that pressure isn't soul-destroying or anxiety inducing, but moves the soul toward prayer and acknowledging its dependency upon God.

Which is to say, the eternality of the soul raises the stakes of the charge we have been given...The stewardship we show has consequences well beyond the moment that we exercise it.

<https://mereorthodoxy.com/reading-the-hymns-a-charge-to-keep-i-have/>

Living in Two Worlds (A Letter to Timothy)

Joel Beeke
July 7, 2020

Dear Timothy,

The Puritans show us how to live from a two-world point of view. Richard Baxter's *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* is a magnificent demonstration of the power that the hope of heaven should have for the directing, controlling, and energizing of your life here on earth. Despite being 800+ pages, this classic became household reading in Puritan homes, exceeded only by John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which, by the way, is an allegorical proof of my point. Bunyan's pilgrim is heading for the Celestial City, which he never has out of his mind except when he is betrayed by some form of spiritual malaise.

The Puritans believed that you ought to have heaven "in your eye" throughout your entire earthly pilgrimage. They took seriously the two-worldly, now/not yet dynamics of the New Testament, stressing that keeping the "hope of glory" before our minds helps guide and keep our lives straight here on earth. Living in the light of eternity for the Puritans often necessitated radical self-denial. Timothy, refuse to become a self-seeking, spiritually careless minister, and instead, deny indulging in anything you cannot pray about or pursue in light of the immense value of eternity.

Like the Puritans, live in terms of the settled judgment that the joy of heaven will make amends of any losses and crosses, strains and pains that we must endure on earth if we are going to follow Christ faithfully.

Regard preparedness to die as the first step in learning to live. View this earth as God's dressing-room and gymnasium that prepares you for heaven.

When visiting Robert Murray M'Cheyne's church in Dundee a few years ago, I couldn't help but notice a large flat stone, perhaps 8' x 8', placed at the entrance of the graveyard adjacent to the church. I got down on my hands and knees to wipe away the dust and dirt that was clouding a single word carved into the center of that large stone. I traced the word with my fingers: "Eternity" is all it said. I have little doubt that M'Cheyne, permeated by the Puritan spirit, had it placed there, so that no one could visit that graveyard without considering the solemn reality of their future state.

When Jonathan Edwards was thirteen years old, he wrote in his diary, "God, stamp eternity upon my eyes." Dear Timothy, make it your daily prayer: "O Triune God, stamp eternity on my eyes, my conscience, my soul, my hands and feet, my family and public worship, yes, my entire being and ministry—every sermon I preach and class I teach, every pastoral visit I make and every article I write. Help me to preach as a dying man to dying people. Help me to always live on the edge of eternity—with shod feet, girt loins, and ready staff—prepared to meet the living God every day."

Conclusion

There's so much more to learn from the Puritans, Timothy—how they promoted the authority of Scripture, biblical evangelism, church reform, the spirituality of the law, spiritual warfare against indwelling sin, the filial fear of God, the dreadfulness of hell and the glories of heaven—but this letter is already too long. In a word, Timothy, I advise you, as I advise myself: Emulate Puritan spirituality. Let's ask ourselves questions like these: Are we, like the Puritans, thirsting to glorify the triune God? Are we motivated by biblical truth and biblical fire? Do we share the Puritan view of the vital necessity of conversion and of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ? It is not enough to just read the Puritans. A stirring of interest in the Puritans is not the same thing as a revival of Puritanism. We need the inward disposition of the Puritans—the authentic, biblical, intelligent piety they showed in our hearts, lives, and churches.

Let me challenge you, Timothy! Will you live godly in Christ Jesus like the Puritans? Will you go beyond studying their writings, discussing their ideas, recalling their achievements, and berating their failures? Will you practice the degree of obedience to God's Word for which they strove?

Will you serve God as they served Him? Will you live with one eye on eternity as they did? “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16).

Warmly, in the Master’s bonds,
Joel R. Beeke

Living Out The Charge We Have...

We covenant, as a church in Dorchester, Massachusetts, to reform our families, engaging ourselves to a conscientious care to set up and maintain the worship of God in our homes. And to walk in our homes with perfect hearts. We resolve, in a faithful discharge of all domestic duties in seeking to educate, instruct and charge our little ones and our whole households to seek to keep the ways of the Lord.

From a Puritan Church in Dorchester.
Quoted in: Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, Zondervan, 1986, p. 80.

God wants us to be dependable even when it costs us. This is what distinguishes godly faithfulness from the ordinary dependability of secular society.

Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*

Faithfulness means firmly adhering to the observance of a duty, keeping your word, fulfilling your obligations. It involves being loyal, constant, and reliable.

Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters*

The Christian life with the gifts and opportunities God gives us is a stewardship – a trust from God with precious responsibilities that call for faithfulness. But it is important to realize that faithfulness in the smaller responsibilities forms the basis for being entrusted with greater responsibilities. The Lord pointed to this basic principle in Luke 16:10, “The one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much; and the one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” How one handles the smaller responsibilities of life demonstrates character and the capacity for faithfulness in greater responsibilities. They serve as stepping stones for the privilege of serving in areas of greater responsibility.

J Hampton Keathley

The mark of the false prophet or teacher is self-serving unfaithfulness to God and His truth. It may be that he says what he shouldn't; but it is far more likely that he will err by failing to say what he should. He will gloss over all the tough questions and issues as did the false prophets in the Old Testament who went around saying, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace (Jer. 6:14). They wouldn't speak the tough word calling for repentance nor suggest that Israel was out of sorts spiritually. Instead they brought groundless comfort, lulling people into a false sense of security so that their hearers were totally unprepared for the judgment which eventually came on them. There are teachers in the church today who never speak of repentance, self-denial, the call to be relatively poor for the Lord's sake, or any other demanding aspect of discipleship. Naturally they are popular and approved, but for all that, they are false prophets. We will know such people by their fruits. Look at the people to whom they have ministered. Do these folks really know and love the Lord? Are they prepared to take risks, even hazard their lives, for Jesus? Or are they comfortable, inactive, and complacent? If so, they are self-deceived, and those who have irresponsibly encouraged their self-deception will have to answer for it. Anyone who is in a position of spiritual leadership who fails to teach the more demanding, less comfortable, "narrow gate" and "rough road" side of discipleship becomes a false prophet.

J I Packer

Godly concern is caring about important things for the right reasons. It is also accompanied by a trust in God's ultimate control and faithfulness. This kind of concern helps you be responsible to God and does not send you into a confused status. It will involve a focus on the responsibilities for today, eternal goals and others... For your concern to be the right kind of concern you must be focused on what is true and helpful from God's perspective (see 1 Cor. 7:32-33; 2 Cor. 11:28; Phil. 2:20)... [However], ungodly concern (anxiety) goes beyond reasonable concern and involves worry about mere possibilities. When we are anxious, we are not focused on God and what is true and helpful. When we are anxious, we are often concerned that something we want to happen may not happen. Therefore, we are focused on difficulties of the future, temporal matters, and self (see Mt. 6:31-32).

Stuart Scott, The Exemplary Husband

"A CHARGE TO KEEP I HAVE"

"...And keep the charge of the LORD, that ye die not; for so I am commanded" (Lev. 8.35)

I. Stanza 1 tells us that we have a charge to keep

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

1 Corinthians 6:20...

20 ...you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 10:31...

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God.

Matthew 28:18-20...

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. **19** Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

II. Stanza 2 tells us that this charge requires us to serve the present age

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

Titus 2:11-14...

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and in a godly manner in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, eager for good deeds.

Romans 12:1,2...

Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which* is your spiritual service of worship. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Ephesians 4:1...

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called

Colossians 1:9-14...

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard *about it*, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all perseverance and patience; joyously **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **13** For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins

III. Stanza 3 tells us that we need to keep this charge with jealous care

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

Hebrews 4:13...

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer.

Romans 14:12...

12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

IV. Stanza 4 tells us that in order to keep our charge we must watch and pray

Help me to watch and pray,
And still on Thee rely,
Oh, let me not my trust betray,
But press to realms on high.

Mark 14:37,38...

37 And He *came and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? **38** Keep watching and praying, so that you will not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

1 Timothy 6:20,21...

20 Timothy, protect what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly, empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”— **21** which some have professed and *thereby* have gone astray from the faith.

The Overarching Theme of Living for Eternity

Psalm 90:12

So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may present *to You* a heart of wisdom.

1 Peter 4:7-11

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. **8** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. **9** Be hospitable to one another without complaint. **10** As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God.

11 Whoever speaks *is to do so as one who is speaking* actual words of God; whoever serves *is to do so as one who is serving* by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Living in Light of Eternity...

“A man’s greatest care should be for that place where he dwelleth longest; therefore eternity should be in his scope.”

Thomas Manton

“Time is short. Eternity is long. It is only reasonable that this short life be lived in the light of eternity. That only is worth my having which I can have forever. That only is worth my grasping which death cannot tear out of my hand.”

Charles Spurgeon

“We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours. Conversely, we are God's: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's. Let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's. Let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal (Rom. 14:8; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19)....Let this therefore be the first step, that a man depart from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord. I call 'service' not only what lies in obedience to God's Word but what turns the mind of man, empty of its own carnal sense, wholly to the bidding of God's Spirit.”

John Calvin, Institutes (3.7.1)

Only One Life, Twill Soon Be Past – Poem by C.T Studd

Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its days I must fulfill,
living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last. "

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.
And when I am dying, how happy I'll be,
If the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee.

Excerpt from Matthew Henry Commentary on Leviticus 8 (emphasis added)....

...Thus the time of our life, like the six days, must be our preparation for the perfection of our consecration to God in the everlasting sabbath: they attended day and night (v. 35), and so constant should we be in our meditation on God's law, Ps. 1:2 . They attended to keep the charge of the Lord: we have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to serve; and it must be our daily care to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord our Master, who will shortly call us to an account about it, and it is at our utmost peril if we neglect it. Keep it that you die not; it is death, eternal death, to betray the trust we are charged with; by the consideration of this we must be kept in awe.

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/leviticus/8.html>