

“A GOOD MAN AND FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

Acts 11: 19-26 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson
Ordination Charge For Pastor C. Sam Tremaine
Trinity Evangelical Free Church, Boise, Idaho
Sunday Morning, April 10, 2011

Dearly beloved, here at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Boise, Idaho, it is my deep joy, my high honor, and my bounden duty as your superintendent to be here today to deliver this ordination charge to your pastor. Some of the words I say will be directly addressed to you two, Pastor Sam and Becky Tremaine, but much of this message will be addressed to you all as individual believers, but especially to you all corporately, as the local flock of God whom Pastor Sam is shepherding. I trust this ordination charge for your pastor will not only challenge you, Pastor Sam and Becky, but that it will serve as a kind of benchmark for you as a church for the days ahead. I hope this message will help you all pray more fervently for Pastor Sam and for Becky as Pastor Sam is ordained today by you in this local church. This day is a high day in the life of your pastor. I trust that you, Pastor Sam and Becky, will not forget this day. I also trust that you as a church will never forget this day when you laid holy hands upon your shepherd to publicly ordain him to Gospel ministry. I further trust that each of us involved in this ordination service today will realize we are affirming God’s prior call of Pastor Sam Tremaine. We are publicly honoring and seconding the motion of the ordination of Pastor Sam that God sealed on his life, many years ago, when He called Pastor Sam to pastoral ministry.

Over 150 years ago, a powerful 19th century poet, of Puritan stock, Josiah Holland, knew the remedy for America. He said, “God give us men. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands; men whom the lust of office cannot buy; men who will not lie; men who will stand before a popular leader and condemn his treacherous flatteries without winking; tall men, sun crowned, who live above the fog; in public duty and private thinking.” Pastor Sam, you are one such man whom we salute by faith today in this public ordination charge. God has shown me that you are a Barnabas of a pastor, hence I want to study with us all today, the life that I believe God would have you use often as a model of ordained ministry. In Acts 13: 1,2, I read, “Now there were in Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting,

the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me or ordain for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them.” Today, following the adventures in the life of Barnabas that are recorded in the exciting book of Acts, I call you to model for your people a life, Pastor Sam, that all your people can follow. Paul once said, in I Corinthians 4: 16, “I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.” Using the same word for followers or imitators, **mimetes**, Paul went on to say in the same first letter to Corinth, in I Corinthians 11: 1, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” This little Greek word Paul used, **mimetes**, means to mimic, to imitate, to be a follower, or to constantly be in the same habit and practice as your leader and pastor, Pastor Sam. This is a high calling, Pastor Sam, but it is your calling from God, to which this church is ordaining you today.

Nevertheless, though we have lots of information about the apostle Paul and his work in the early church, we have far less information about the man who mentored him, the apostle, Barnabas. In the figures who founded the Christian church, Paul is one of the greatest lights along with Peter. Barnabas who mentored Paul is one of the lesser lights. Yet, behind the scenes, without the lesser role of Barnabas, we may never have known of the greatness of Paul. This ordination charge is asking all of you to model after this special man of God you are ordaining, Pastor Sam. He is not known perhaps all over Treasure Valley as the greatest light among the Gospel preachers, but he is a great light in God’s sight and in my eyes. Your pastor, is your great pastor. I call you Pastor Sam to this holy charge with your wife as your help-meet. I call you as a people, a flock Pastor Sam shepherds, to imitate three major models of his life. What are these three models I call you all to follow in Pastor Sam’s life?

I CALL YOU ALL TO FOLLOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUR PASTOR IN LAYING DOWN YOUR LIVES AND

TREASURES AT THE FEET OF JESUS. (I.) Turn with me to Acts 4: 34-37. You’ll notice that this first mention of this Levite of Cyprus or Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles, was named Barnabas for a good reason. Barnabas means Bar, son of, and Nabas means encouragement, exhortation, or prophecy. We find this man Barnabas 24 times in the book of Acts and 5 other times mentioned in I Corinthians 9: 6, Galatians 2: 1, 9, and 13, and Colossians 4: 10. In our text, Barnabas led the way in modeling the life of one who lays down his life and his possessions for the needs of others. Shepherding, at the most elemental level, Pastor Sam, is laying down your life for your sheep. Jesus said in John 10: 11, “I

am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” This word, “laying down” our lives and finances as Barnabas did is spoken of further by Jesus in John 10: 17, 18. “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

What am I calling you to, Pastor Sam and Becky? Acts 4: 37 tells us that Barnabas owned a tract of land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostle’s feet.” Jesus’ word about laying down His own life is the same Greek verb used of Barnabas laying down the entire price of the land he sold. He didn’t have to do it. He did it voluntarily, led by the Spirit of God. You remember the tragedy in Acts 5: 1-11 of Ananias and his wife Sapphira trying to duplicate the gift of Barnabas or to trump his gift, but they lied to Peter and the other apostles about the price of the land. Both of them fell dead at the feet of the apostles when they lied. Beloved, what I am calling this church to do, as you follow Pastor Sam, is to honestly lay down your lives and your treasures before the Lord, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I call you, Pastor Sam and you, as a church, to be generous givers as Barnabas was. Generosity in giving to God is ample proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit in control in your lives. Lay down your treasures to Jesus.

What is this Greek word, lay down? The Greek word is **tithemi**. It means to appoint, to place before, to bow down or kneel down before God to give a gift, or to ordain. Tithemi is used by Jesus in John 15: 16 and some translations including the KJV translate this word ordain. Listen to John 15: 16 where Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and tithemi, ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...” Paul states in I Timothy 2: 7, writes, “Whereunto I am tithemi, ordained a preacher...” Pastor Sam, before you have ever laid down your life to the Lord, He called you and appointed you, yes, He laid it down for you that you should lay down your life for Him. We are here today to celebrate and affirm God’s call to you to lay down your life before Him to be His preacher, pastor and undershepherd. Laying down our lives is far beyond selling a tract of land and laying it at the apostle’s feet. What God is after in all of us is that we lay down our lives before Him. Pastor Sam, first of all, I call you to lead the way at Trinity EFC in laying down your life to Jesus so that your wife and your flock can follow in your train. I John 3: 16

is clear, “We know love by this, that He tithemi laid down His life for us; and we ought to tithemi lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Pastor Sam, this first part of your ordained call to pastor ought to be a profound conviction in your life. Pastor J. H. Jowett in 1910, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, once said about his call. “Now I hold with profound conviction that before a man selects the Christian ministry as his vocation, he must have the assurance that the selection has been imperatively constrained by the eternal God.” He said, “The call of the eternal must ring through the rooms of his soul as clearly as the sound of the morning bell rings through the valley of Switzerland, calling the peasants to early prayer and praise. A minister with insecurity about whether he should preach should cease and desist until the Lord rings the bell of his heart with His clarion call.” Pastor Sam, the Lord has rung the bell of your heart to lay down your treasures, your life and your love for Him and for His church here at Trinity Church, follow Pastor Sam as he follows Christ. Secondly,

I CALL YOU ALL TO FOLLOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUR PASTOR IN REMAINING TRUE TO THE LORD. (II.) I want us to look at the words I read as we began this message in Acts 11: 19-26. The picture is strong here of new Gentile believers coming to faith in Jesus along with Jewish believers receiving the Lord. In the early church, this is why Barnabas was finally ordained in Antioch. The Jerusalem church sent this Son of Encouragement down to Antioch to inspect, investigate, and find out the truth. Were Gentiles really coming to Jesus? Why, Acts 11: 22, why did the church in Jerusalem send Barnabas up north to Antioch to investigate the reports of saved Gentiles? Certainly, the Jerusalem church was led by the Holy Spirit, but they had their eyes open. They sent a man with a level head and with a loving heart. Notice what Barnabas did when he went up to Antioch and found the reports were true. I read in Acts 11: 23, “Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.

Why didn't Barnabas chide or rebuke the Jewish believers for winning Gentiles to Jesus? Why didn't Barnabas hurry back to Jerusalem to report the fallen state of the Antioch church in inviting Gentiles to Jesus? All Barnabas did was to rejoice in the new believers and then he began to encourage them all with resolute heart or a steadfast love to remain true to the Lord? Why? Acts 11: 24 tells the story. “For he, Barnabas, was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith. And considerable numbers

were brought to the Lord.” But read on. Barnabas had one more mission while he was up ministering at Antioch. (Acts 11: 25, 26) He knew about Saul, soon to be called Paul’s sudden and miraculous conversion. He knew Saul had a faith too hot to handle for most of the Jerusalem church. We read, “And Barnabas left for Tarsus to look for Saul.” (This was no short journey—it was a distance of 150 miles up north to the tip of the Mediterranean Sea and then west to Tarsus.) Read on. “And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

Pastor Sam, I call you afresh to go after the lost, but don’t stop there. When young believers are truly born again, but looked upon skeptically by others, go after them, as Barnabas went after Saul. Mentor these young believers. Give them your affirmation and chance to serve in this church. Encourage them with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.” Pastor Sam, these are perilous times. Jesus is coming soon. I call you to mentor new believers in this church to prepare for spiritual battle in the days ahead. Jim Elliott, who was martyred by the Auca Indians spoke as a young man of the dearth and drought in America of a spiritual wartime mentality. He wrote, “I do not understand why I have never seen in America what missionaries write about—that sense of swords being drawn, the smell of war with demon powers...our warfare too often is merely a sham fight with shadows, a cold war of weary words.” Pastor Sam, I charge you to patiently mentor and instruct your flock with an awareness of the times. Encourage your people with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord. Thirdly, and lastly,

I CALL YOU ALL TO FOLLOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUR PASTOR IN REFUSING TO QUICKLY GIVE UP ON BELIEVERS WHO HAVE FAILED. (III.) Turn to Acts 15: 36-41. Sons of encouragement seldom have sharp disagreements. But if there is ever a place for a sharp disagreement, it is, Pastor Sam, in finding great difficulty in giving up on a brother or sister in the Lord in your church that you believe has truly repented. I call you, Pastor Sam to mentor your John Marks and to even give them second chances after departing in Pamphylia. Sailing away to Cyrus with Mark, and without the pleasure of Paul’s blessing may be terribly tough, but remember, because of Barnabas’ love for John Mark, we have our first Gospel, the Gospel of Mark.

Church, today, I haven't called your Pastor to preach the Word. II Timothy 4: 1,2. I believe he is. I haven't called Pastor Sam to be instant in season and out of season. II Timothy 4: 2,3, despite people who want their ears tickled. I believe he is. I haven't called Pastor Sam to doctrinal purity, II Timothy 4: 4. Many of you heard Pastor Sam's defense of the Gospel yesterday. He is pure and sound in his doctrine. I haven't called Pastor Sam to be true to his call as a pastor—to make his calling and election sure. He is being true. I haven't called Pastor Sam to be honest with integrity of heart as a shepherd. He is a man of integrity. I haven't asked Pastor Sam to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. He already has. I haven't called Pastor Sam to not neglect the spiritual gift that is within him. He is not neglecting to use his gifts. I haven't called your pastor to faithfully read, preach and teach the Word. He is. I haven't called your pastor to be absorbed in his work so his progress as a pastor is evident to you all. (I Timothy 4: 14, 15) He is. I haven't called Pastor Sam to be true to his wife. He is being true. All of these calls are needed when we are ordained. I haven't called Pastor Sam to do the work of an evangelist and to fulfill his ministry. I believe he is.

All of those calls and challenges would be and would have been appropriate today as Pastor Sam is ordained. Yet God has called me to give you as a church along with Pastor Sam, 3 calls. **I CALL YOU ALL TO FOLLOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUR PASTOR IN LAYING DOWN YOUR LIVES AND TREASURES AT THE FEET OF JESUS. (I.) I CALL YOU ALL TO FOLLOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUR PASTOR IN REMAINING TRUE TO THE LORD. (II.) I CALL YOU ALL TO FOLLOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUR PASTOR IN REFUSING TO QUICKLY GIVE UP ON BELIEVERS WHO HAVE FAILED. (III.)** That's all, except for one last charge. This charge came first from the esteemed Pastor Philips Brooks. I pray this final prayer for you all, but especially for you Pastor Sam and for you, Becky. Here is the challenge for you all. "Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men *and women!* Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle." Now Pastor Sam, I close with the words of Paul to Archippus. "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Amen. Let's pray!