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## A Charge to Keep

C. William Pollard

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**Emmanuel University  
Commencement Address  
May 25, 2003  
Oradea, Romania**

**C. William Pollard**

**“A Charge to Keep”**

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It is a special privilege for me to be here today and share with you in this graduation ceremony. It is a time of celebration and a time of commencement.

As family and friends, we come with thankful hearts to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduates.

And for you, the graduates, it is not only a time of celebration for a job well done. It is also a time of commencement. It is to you that I speak this morning.

It is to you that I give this Charge to Keep.

Much has gone into the process that has brought you to this point of commencement including:

- The faithful and prayerful support of your parents and, in some cases, spouses and friends; and

- The dedication and commitment of the faculty that is not only focused on academic excellence but also the integration of their faith and trust in Jesus Christ with the learning process.

Much prayer, sacrifice and hard work have gone into the establishment, growth and development of this university that we call Emmanuel – God with us.

It is a university that not only has standing and recognition in Romania, but also has an expanding reputation world-wide as an institution of Christ-centered education.

Thus, the degree you will receive today has a significance and acceptance that provides each of you a unique platform of opportunity. An opportunity to serve and engage the world that our God so loved and to be salt and light so that those you touch may see and know the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is your Charge to Keep.

It is a charge that comes directly from God's Holy Word as He challenges you to be followers of Jesus and to engage those in your community of work and life with a message of His love and compassion, a message of hope and salvation. You are His salt and light.

Read Matthew 5: 12-16

As part of your Biblical training here at Emmanuel, you have acquired knowledge and understanding so that you can better define your faith. The definition or theology of our faith is an important and true reference point for our life.

You also have been encouraged to declare and share your faith – to share the good news of the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation. For we know that faith comes from hearing – hearing from the Word of God.

But the most important lessons of life are still ahead of you. Your classroom lessons, studies and knowledge have prepared you now, in a renewed way, not only to define and declare your faith but to do your faith.

Regardless of your emphasis of studies here at Emmanuel, whether it was Biblical studies, business, psychology or some other discipline, you are now moving on – moving from a somewhat cloistered environment to that outside world. You may be going on for more study at a secular university or to a job or to a profession. Whatever it be, the environment will be more hostile and indifferent to the defining and declaring of your faith. In such a world, the doing

of your faith will often carry a stronger message. Your deeds will become increasingly important in proclaiming and engaging the world for Christ. It will be one of the most effective ways for you to Keep this Charge. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, you will need to “preach the Gospel every day and only when necessary use words”.

Now the charge of Jesus to His followers and disciples to be salt and light was given within the greater context of His discourse or Sermon on the Mount – covering how we should then live, providing examples, principles and characteristics of the life of a follower of Jesus Christ.

It is to be a life of humility, patience, righteousness, purity, prayer, kindness, forgiveness, joyfulness even in suffering, love and service to others.

In Colossians Chapter 3, Paul refers to many of these same principles and characteristics as he describes our new life in Christ and suggests that they are like a wardrobe or closet of clothes that God has prepared for us to wear. Yes, He will help us to get dressed but He won't force us to put them on. That choice is still ours. But as we do so, the salt of our life is where it should be – out of the shaker, adding to and flavoring the witness of our life. And the bushel or basket will be taken off the light that is within us to show Christ through our actions and deeds as we engage a lost and needy world.

An example is often better than a thousand words.

Let me share with you the story of a young man who, 13 years ago, sat at his graduation ceremonies looking forward, much like all of you today, to the life ahead of him. He was a Christian. He was graduating from a Christian college. He had a sweetheart who was later to become his wife. He was looking forward to a career in computer technology that would eventually lead to a position of development and sales with one of the world's leading software companies. His focus for life was simple and straightforward. He wanted to serve and follow the Lord he loved, raise and support a family, and excel at his work with computers.

Todd was a very ordinary person. He regularly read and studied the Bible, but there was still much for him to learn and he was not a student of theology. He could share his faith with clarity, but he didn't always take advantage of every opportunity and he was not known for his preaching ability.

A time would come, however, when Todd's salt and light – his actions and deeds – would speak volumes to literally millions of people about the purpose and meaning of his faith and the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

You see, on September 11, 2001, Todd Beamer was on that fateful United Airlines plane that was overtaken by terrorist hijackers. The flight was originally headed for California, but was soon diverted as the hijackers killed the pilots and took over control of the plane. Their target was Washington DC and the death of thousands of people.

Todd did what his wife would later describe as normal – a characteristic of his life. He prayed and then he acted. First, he used an airphone to call an operator and explain his situation, then asked her to pray with him, and then, with a call of "Let's roll" he led the charge with a group of other passengers to overcome the hijackers.

Although the plane would crash in an open field with all aboard lost, a national disaster would be averted and the story of Todd Beamer's faith would be told all over the world.

While the newspaper headlines and the TV commentators and the President of the United States all gave tribute to Todd and to the reality of his faith, one of the most telling tributes to his life of salt and light was the action taken by his employer to establish a recognition award in memory and honor of Todd. The recognition would be for employees who evidenced the characteristics of Todd's life in their work and in their relationships with others. The qualifications listed

for the award reflected those same characteristics that are covered in Matthew Chapter 5 and Colossians 3.

You see, Todd, on a daily basis, not just in a time of crisis, had put on the clothes – the wardrobe of Christ and had so lived his life as a witness and testimony to his fellow workers that they saw Christ in him. He was both salt and light. He was faithful in his Charge to Keep and in so doing, he engaged a lost and needy world.

It is my prayer this day that as you go forth, you will take up this Charge to Keep and in the words of Charles Wesley in that famous old hymn of our faith, say with me: “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 power engage; To do my Master’s will.”

You have been entrusted with much as part of your education here at Emmanuel and it is required of a steward that he be found faithful. Take the salt out of the shaker, uncover the light within you and remember your source of strength and seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

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