

## "Wholly Given To God"

⇒ **Text: Acts 17:13-16**

⇒ **Intro:**

- Here we have the story of Paul in his second missionary journey.
- He has just left Thessalonica, where he preached and saw several people saved.
- These he formed into a church but was run out of town by the unbelieving Jews.
- He flees to Berea, where he enters the synagogue as he did in Thessalonica and preached.
- But the Jews of Thessalonica soon found out where Paul had fled to.
  - So we find here in **verse 14: - Read**
- Paul leaves Berea alone.
  - Silas and Timothy remain in Berea.
  - **Verse 15** says that the brethren carried Paul to Athens.

- Paul gets off the ship and tells the brethren to go back and get Timothy and Silas quickly.
- This is where we find Paul in our text.
- He is in Athens, a very idolatrous city, waiting for his companions.
  - **Verse 16** says: **Read**
- This verse says that Paul's spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.
  - Now we know what he ended up doing.
  - He went and started preaching to those people.
  - But what we can only speculate on, is what he was thinking when he saw those people.
  - I don't know, but this passage did get me to thinking about something we see today.
- I read that phrase "**wholly given to**" in **verse 16** and it stirred my heart to preach this message which I have titled, "**Wholly Given To God**".
- What does it mean to be wholly given to something?

- It means that you give all that you can give for that something.
  - It consumes you.
  - It overtakes you.
  - It controls you.
- Stop and think of absolutely anything on Earth today, and if you dig deep enough, you will find a person wholly given to that thing.
  - For example:
    - Hamburgers – Dave Thomas (Wendy’s)
    - Golf – Tiger Woods
    - Computers – Bill Gates
    - Money – Donald Trump
    - Lying – Bill Clinton
- Sports, Television, Radio, Houses, Lands, Investing, Retailing, Karate, on and on and on.
  - No matter what you can name this morning, somebody in this world has given their absolute all.

- They have sacrificed anything and everything to obtain whatever the prize is.
- **1 Cor. 9:25**, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”
  - Name any cause, there are martyrs for that cause.
  - Name any purpose, there are those who spend their lives obtaining it.
  - Name any sport, there are those who are the best.
  - Name any feat, somebody will try it.
- What am I trying to say this morning?
  - I am trying to say, that the whole human race seems to be wholly given to something besides God.
  - He is the one goal that few if any ever wholly give themselves to.

- I want us to consider the characteristics of a person that is wholly given to something.
  - I believe we can learn how to be wholly given to God, by seeing the sacrifices of a person wholly given to something else.
  - Though the object is different, the method is exactly the same.
- What must a person do to be wholly given to God?
  - They must do what any other person wholly given to something does.
- ⇒ **1. They must have DESIRE.**
  - Without desire, there is no hope to be the best at anything.
    - How many times have you heard Tiger Woods say, "**You know, I really hate this game**".
    - The truth is he loves the game of golf.
    - He has desire for it.
  - Now I believe desire to wholly serve God comes from the Lord.

- **1 Cor. 2:14**, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
- Without the Lord nudging you out of bed this morning, you would have never come to church.
  - Nor would I.
  - But there is that presence on the inside of us, that gives us the desire to serve God.
  - His name is the Holy Spirit.
- Desire is the easy part of this message.
  - I really believe if you ever meet a Christian that had no desire at all for God, the things of God, the Word of God, the Righteousness of God, or the Son of God, that person is either severely backslidden on God or he is not saved.
  - Because God gives to each of us the desire to serve him.

- All we have to do is yield to that desire and put some action to it.
- Desire means to long, hope or wish for.
  - It means to covet.
- Do you long for God Christian?
  - Do you hope and wish for his presence in your life?
  - That's what it takes.
  - You have to desire Him if you want to be Wholly given to Him.
  - **No one is ever wholly given to something without desire.**
- Our problem many times, is we desire everything BUT God.
  - We become terrific at all the things of this world we desire, but we let our relationship with the Lord suffer because of it.
  - There is nothing wrong with desiring to be the best at what we do.

- But shouldn't we extend that to our relationship with the Lord as well?
- How is it, that we can be a professional at everything and an amateur when it comes to God?
  - Something is not right about that.
- Where's the desire to draw nigh to God today?
  - Where is the desire to pray?
  - Read the Bible? Witness?
  - Separate from the world so we can fellowship with God?
- The truth is, few act on the desires of serving God because they are too busy serving everything else.
- ⇒ Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24**, "**No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**"
- Do you have desire this morning to serve God?

- DO you have desire to be the best Christian in the whole world?
- ⇒ So, what must a person do to be wholly given to God?
- **They must have desire.**
- ⇒ **2. They must have DETERMINATION**
- This is something that many Christians fail at.
    - They have plenty of desire, but little determination.
  - Did you know that you can't finish anything without determining to do so?
  - What does determine mean?
    - It means to make up you mind.
    - And that's what many Christians need to do.
    - They need to make up their minds to serve God, and quit playing games.
  - Many of us are like Pilate.
    - **See Acts 3:13**
  - Pilot was determined to let Jesus go, but that determination lasted about 5 minutes.

- How many of us determine to do something and 5 minutes into it we just quit.
- For example:
  - You say, "I'm determined to read my Bible every day this year and you don't even read it every day of the first week of January."
- If Christians are going to be wholly given to God, we must be determined to do what ever it takes to be that way.
- The Apostle Paul said in **Romans 7:18**, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."
- We have the desire.
  - We determine to be determined.
  - And then we end up falling by the wayside.
  - And it becomes an endless cycle of failure.
- What gives athletes determination?
  - I'll tell you, it's the prize.

- **See Phil. 3:13-14**
- We Christians need to get our eyes off the rewards of this life and concentrate on the next.
- Remember what the Lord said: “**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**” –  
Matthew 6:21
- That’s our problem, we can’t be wholly given to God because our hearts are not wholly given to him.
- Isn’t that right?
- Now we all know how to be determined, don’t we.
- Somebody said, “What you love to do, you do, and you do it with enthusiasm”.
- What is that?
- That’s determination!
- When is the last time you saw a football team win a game and leave the field with their heads hanging down?
- They leave with enthusiasm, because they have won don’t they?

- How did they win?
- With Desire coupled with Determination.
- You can spend a lifetime with desire.
- But without determination to carry it through, you’ll never reach the goal.
- We sing the hymn:
- I am resolved no longer to linger charmed by the worlds delights.
- Things that are higher things that are brighter, these have allured my site.
- We need some resolve in us, if we want to be wholly given to God.
- ⇒ So a person wholly given to God must have Desire and Determination.
- ⇒ They must also have –
- ⇒ **3. Defeat**
- No great achiever has ever become so without great defeat.

- **Proverbs 24:16** says, “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.”
  - Falling 7 times?
  - I would call that defeat.
  - But the defeats didn’t defeat him.
  - He got back up.
- For many Christians, they have been defeated so many times they loose the determination and the desire to go on.
  - They let the defeats whip them.
- Most of us know that Edison invented the light bulb.
  - But did you know he failed a thousand times until he found the right filament?
  - Did you know it took 1000 experiments before he perfected the nickel battery?
  - Aren’t you glad he didn’t give up at 999?

- God needs Christians today that will not quit when they fail.
  - He needs Christians with the character and resolve to say with Joshua:
    - “..as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” – Joshua 24:15
- Christian, do not ask yourself, “If I fail what am I going to do?” ask yourself, “When I fail, what am I going to do?”
  - Defeat is the normal process of victory, don’t you know that?
- A person takes 3<sup>rd</sup> place and it makes them strive for 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - They finally get second and they set sights on 1<sup>st</sup>, until they finally reach it.
  - That’s what we must do.
- Someone said, “Failure is God’s own tool for carving the finest outlines of success in the character of his children.”

- What separates the winners from the losers?
    - Failure?
      - No.
    - Defeat?
      - No. ✘
    - It's Determination.
    - It's Desire.
  - Winners don't quit.
    - They strive and go on.
    - They do what ever it takes, no matter what it takes to be wholly given to that thing they love.
    - That should be the mark of every Christian.
  - It's a compliment to be called a fanatic.
    - What is a fanatic anyway?
      - Someone that's wholly given to something.
  - The next time someone calls you a religious fanatic, tell them thanks for the compliment.
- ⇒ So we need **Desire**, **Determination**, some **defeat** so we can learn and grow.

- But before all of this, we must make a **Decision**.
- ⇒ **4. Decision**
- Every great road to success begins with a decision.
    - D.L. Moody said, The world has yet to see a man wholly given to God.
    - Can you imagine what gains could be made if God could find just one or two Christians that will sell out to Him?
  - I like what Joshua told the Israelites.
    - **Joshua 24:15**, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
  - If you are saved and you know that the only way to be happy in life is to serve the Lord, then why not serve him with everything that's in you?



- Why be lukewarm?
- Why serve with half effort?
- **See Rev. 3:15-16.**
- God would rather us not serve him at all, than serve him with half a heart, did you know that?
  - You just read it.
  - The point is, we ought to serve Him with everything that is in us.
  - Doesn't he deserve it?
- **See Phil. 3:7-8.**
- Paul said, nothing mattered to him but Jesus Christ.
  - Maybe that is why he is considered one of the greatest Christians that ever lived.
  - And you will find, as you search secular history, that the greatest people in their respective professions were great because they decided to set aside everything to be that way.

- And you will find in Christianity, the greatest Christians are those who gave everything they had, for the cause of Christ.
- If you look up the word CHIMPANZEE in any modern encyclopedia, one woman's name is going to show up there.
  - Her name is Jane Goodall.
  - She set out to learn about the Chimpanzee.
  - She went to Africa and setup a camp by herself and spent 10 years of her life out of society and with the chimpanzees just to learn about them.
  - Do you understand what I'm getting at?
  - She gave up 10 years of her existence on Planet Earth to watch chimps play in the jungle.
- And it's getting harder and harder to get Christians to pray for 10 minutes to their God.
- What's wrong with us folks?
  - Why are we so weak and so defeated when it comes to selling out to God?

- Perhaps we have become so lazy and so nonchalant that we simply don't care to be sold out to God.

⇒ **Conclusion:**

- What are the characteristics of those who are wholly given to something?
  - 1. They have Desire
  - 2. They have Determination
  - 3. They have Defeats
  - 4. They have Decided that all their effort is worth it, to obtain the prize.
- The Apostle Paul said in **1Cor. 9:25**, "...Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."
- If the unsaved can have the desire, the determination, experience the defeats, and be decided to obtain their corruptible crown.
- Shouldn't as Christians <sup>do</sup> ~~have~~ the same to obtain our incorruptible crown?

- My friend Are you Wholly Given To God?
  - If not, why not?
- Plea to unsaved.