

We began this series on Revival nine weeks ago and we decided that we wanted to talk about making room for God to move again. And it seems like God has truly been stirring among us. I can't tell you the joy it has brought me to be in the prayer room. Whether it's on a Sunday night with 200 people standing shoulder to shoulder praising the Lord, or to see 40 high school students come to pray at 6am and be in the presence of the Lord before going to school, or to know that we have people who have been seeing professional counselors and psychiatrists for months and months to try to overcome strongholds in their lives without much traction. Because of the way God's grace has miraculously touched them, their counselors and psychiatrists have released them and said they are no longer in need of professional care. In just the last few months we have seen over 120 people baptized with five more today. God really has been moving. This entire series we've been looking at the words of the prophet Habbakuk where the prophet said, "Lord, I have heard of your fame. I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time, make them known." This is what we want. This is our heart's desire. And as I wrap up today, the central truth I want us to be gripped by is that, if we want to see God to great things, if we want to experience more than a flash-in-the-plan religious emotion but a true, sustained revival, our lives must be fully committed and consecrated to God.

If you have your bibles, turn to the book of 2 Timothy chapter 2. The book of 2 Timothy is the last book the Apostle Paul wrote. He penned a letter to a young man he had mentored for about 15 years. This young man was leading a church and being used by God in incredible ways. Paul wanted to see this young man reach his maximum potential for the glory of God—he didn't want to see his life wasted, but for his life to be fully leveraged for Jesus. So he said to him: you have to be consecrated, you have to be set apart.

2 Timothy 2:20-21 says,

"In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. 22 Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

This passage teaches us so much about who God uses and how God uses them. Paul uses a brilliant illustration about all the different **articles** in a house when he says, some things in the house are unique, are special, and set apart, so they get to be used for **special purposes** instead of **common use**. Think about it like this: nearly every bathroom you walk in has two brushes: a tooth brush and a toilet brush. These are both brushes, but we use them for very different purposes, right?! Because one is kept set apart and uncontaminated, we can use it inside our mouths to clean our teeth. Because it is dirty and defiled, no sane person uses it for anything other than the toilet. One time I found my son using it to brush his hair, but he's a toddler, he doesn't know any better. No one who understands anything is going to use a toilet brush for anything other than a toilet. Because it's not clean, it can only be used for one thing.

When God looks down from heaven and says, "I want to do something great in the world, who can I use?" We want him to be able to say, "Here I am, use me. I've removed everything in my life that could compromise my witness, I am fully committed to you. So God, no matter what

you have in mind, I am ready and willing.” And we want him to say that of this church, “Those people, they have made themselves ready, I can use them for any and everything.” We all know this: The world is jaded and cynical when Christians with compromised character and selfish motives rise to prominence. They see the duplicity from a mile away and run the other direction. Our culture doesn’t need anymore corrupt Christian leaders put on a platform. We need people who have cleansed themselves, have been made holy, and are prepared for God’s work.

Paul is writing to this young man saying: you get to decide how much God can do through your life? Do you really want to experience his power and glory and be a vessel he can use? Or do you want to unnecessarily truncate your capacity and siphon off the flow of grace in your life. You get to decide!

Look at the twofold, practical admonition Paul gives:

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

When Paul says flee, the Greek word is *pheugo*, is the same word we get fugitive from in English. So literally, think with me about how fast and intense and deliberate a slave from the south would run North, trying to make their way to freedom. They weren’t stopping to chat with pedestrians, catching up on who’s up in the NBA playoffs! They were 100% focused, giving it all they had because they never wanted the yoke of slavery, the vicious freedom whips laid across their backs again. That’s what Paul is saying you should do from evil desires. But it’s not just what we run from, it’s what we run to. He says we should pursue (*dioko*) righteousness, faith, love, and peace. This is the same word in Greek to picture a runner in a dead-out sprint to finish a race. Every last ounce of energy is left on the track. So let me ask you, is that the vigor and intensity with which you are running away from evil and chasing hard after the things of God...running for your freedom, sprinting to the finish line?

In the book of Numbers, chapter 6, there are instructions given to people who wanted to take a Nazarite vow, which was a way for a normal person in the Israelite community to enter into a season, could last for days, for weeks, or for months, where they chose to be fully devoted to the Lord. During that time they wouldn’t cut their hair, they wouldn’t drink alcohol, and they couldn’t be around a dead body. Each of those three things are meaningful: Not cutting their hair indicated no wasted time focusing on their physical appearance. Not drinking alcohol indicated no wasted time on excess food, luxury, and self indulgence. Not touching a dead body indicated that they would avoid all unclean things that could defile them. Those three commitments were a broad way of saying: during this time, during this season, I am going to be entirely devoted to you. What do you think God could do in and through your life if you took an extended season and said, I am going to live like a Nazarite, I am going to reduce my focus on worldly things and I am going to eliminate my engagement with distracting and unholy things, and I am going to live entirely for the Lord?

A few months ago I told you about how much I love peaches, and how seven years ago I planted a peach tree, and how we had to wait several years for it to produce any peaches, and how two years ago it produced a wonderful crop, over 100 peaches. And then how last year it got a disease and we had a horrible spring, and that we didn’t get any peaches. I told you about

bringing out a tree doctor, pruning the branches, fertilizing the roots, all this care to try to get an abundant harvest. I talked about dreaming for the day when our peach tree had so many peaches I could share them with friends. Not just any friend, but really good friends. A lot of people have asked me if they were “peach sharing friends.” We’ll see. This year, that tree has over 1,000 peaches on it. It has exploded. So I did what any reasonable person would do...I got online and asked AI to tell me what to do with a thousand peaches! And I learned something new, something very important about fruit trees but something I was entirely unaware of. A mature peach tree can easily produce 1,000 peaches, but no peach tree can grow 1,000 healthy, mature peaches. The tree doesn’t have that much energy and sugar, the branches can’t support that much weight. If you want healthy, large, delicious peaches, do you know what you have to do? When the peaches get between the size of a dime and a quarter, you have to go to every branch and pluck peaches off. Sometimes you are looking at an entire cluster of 8 peaches on a branch, but that branch can only sustain one or two fully mature peaches. So you have to remove 6 so that instead of 8 miniature and mediocre peaches, you get two optimal, fantastic peaches. You know I am not just talking about peaches, right? In our lives right now, so many of us are trying to do 8 things really well. And the truth is, we are so divided in our focus that we are mediocre at everything. We don’t have the energy or capacity to carry it all. And we feel it. We end up often over-committed, exhausted, and discontent. I wonder what it would look like if you laid your life open before the Lord and said: God, I want to be fully committed to you, look at every area of my life, even the good areas, and pluck off anything, no matter how attached to it I feel, pluck it off, remove it, so that my life can bear you the fruit you desire.

Many of you would recognize the name DL Moody. He was one of the most prominent voices in the revival that happened in the UK and the US in the late 1800’s. The best estimates are that, during his ministry, he preached to more than 100 million people and more than 1 million made a faith decision when hearing him preach. God used this man in incredible ways, and it all followed a conversation with a friend of his in 1873. He was speaking with a fellow minister named Henry Varley, and Henry said to him, “Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him.” Moody said those words penetrated his heart and reverberated in his soul. And after prayerfully reflecting on them he said, “I will be that man.” God used him to change a generation, and it all came about when he decided to be fully consecrated to the Lord.

What do you think God could do through you if you were fully consecrated to him? Recently I was talking to a young man in our church in his twenties who I know pretty well. He was in a new dating relationship with a young woman who attended another church, where she served and was very engaged. This young lady was attractive, smart, and successful. I asked him if there was any update on the status of the relationship. He said, “Yeah...Our first month or two, everything seemed to be lining up. We connected on a lot of fronts and it was about time to decide if we were going to become serious. And when we got ready to have the commitment conversation, she told me that for a relationship to be more serious for her, she needed to start being more physically intimate and cross lines that I think are reserved only for marriage. This is a young man in our church, having a beautiful woman who he liked tell him she wanted to be more physically active...so many young men would have said, “Oh yeah, I was thinking the same thing.” Others would have been tempted to give in. This young man ended the relationship that night. He said, there is no way I am going to compromise my commitment to God. I am

trying to live my life for Jesus. I have set myself apart for him, I can't be sinning sexually. Then he said, and there was not an ounce of self-righteousness in his tone, "My heart honestly breaks for this young lady, I feel sorry that she is going to church two or three times a week but is not a part of a godly community that has helped her to be consecrated to the Lord like what has happened to me here at The Creek."

"The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him." That guy in our church said, "I will be that man." Will you be that man? Will you be that woman? Will you be that teenager? Will you be that parent? Will you be glad to allow so many other things to fall out of your life so that you can be fully committed to Christ, fully committed to his Kingdom? If the answer is yes, not only can revival happen, but once we are set apart, there is nothing God cannot do through us. We will be set apart, available to the Lord for any use, and when that happens, revival can spread!

I want to show you both sides of the coin, using two examples from the Bible: The first is King Solomon. Here is a man who inherited the throne of his father, and who early on in his reign, asked God for wisdom and received not only wisdom but nearly wealth, fame, and power as well. He is the king who built the temple. And when he built it, the glory of God descended on the temple. He is a man who witnessed a revival, and saw God's grace and power with his own eyes in unmistakable and undeniable ways. But it didn't stick.

Look at the description of his life:

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God. (1 Kings 11:4)

Because his heart turned to other gods and he was no longer fully devoted to the Lord, instead of revival spreading through him, revival died with him. The kingdom he ruled over was divided, and eventually, every single thing he built was torn down and destroyed. Solomon was a king who was compromised, King Josiah who was consecrated.

We read his story in 2 Kings 22 and learn that Josiah became king at a young age—just 8 years old. His father was such a wicked ruler that his officials conspired against him to assassinate him. His grandfather was also a wicked man.

2 Kings 21: 2-6 tells us:

Manasseh (Josiah's grandfather) did evil in the eyes of the Lord...He rebuilt the high places and erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole...He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. He built altars in the temple of the Lord...He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums.

Josiah had a horrible family lineage. His father and his grandfather were evil men who set up idol worship throughout the land. But Josiah's heart was tender to the Lord from a young age. 2 Kings 22 tells us that he renovated the temple, and when he did they found the book of the Law, which had not been read in years. When God's law was read to him and he became aware of just how many of God's laws his people had been violating, he wept in grief, and tore his robes in anguish. Then he got up, and he took action.

4 Josiah ordered the high priest to remove from the temple of the Lord all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley. 6 He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the Lord to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people. 7 He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes that were in the temple of the Lord, the quarters where women did weaving for Asherah.

12 He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the Lord. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley. 13 The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption—the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the people of Ammon. 14 Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones.

24 Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem.

Nothing unholy was safe. Nothing devoted to anything other than the one true God was left standing. Any expression of misguided worship or devotion was torn down, burned in the fire, and ground into dust. He made spectacle and sport of ruthlessly eliminating anything in his entire kingdom that did not honor God.

When Solomon's life was summarized we read:
As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God. (1 Kings 11:4)

But when Josiah's life was summarized we read:
Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength. (2 Kings 23:25)

What an incredible legacy. No one wants to follow in the steps of Solomon...whose heart gets turned away to lesser things. We want to be like Josiah, where it could be said of us: Neither before Michael nor after Michael had a man turned to God like he did, with all his his, and all his soul and all his strength. Neither before Rachel nor after Rachel had a woman turned to God like she did, with all her heart, all her soul, all her strength. Everything unholy turned over and torn down, everything now consecrated entirely to the one true God. "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him." Josiah said: "I will be that man."

Creek family, God is looking for people today, and he is looking for a church today, who says, "I will be that man. I will be that woman. We will be that family. We will be that congregation." We won't be diluted in our devotion. We won't be the bride walking down the aisle but still keeping old flames alive in our hearts. We will be entirely committed, set apart, consecrated, devoted to you with all our hearts. Our hearts will be ready for revival.