

Total Surrender
2 Chronicles 16:1-13

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Introduction: If you had one message left to share what would it be? I honestly tell you that I believe with all of my heart that this is my life message. Total Surrender!

The Text: 2 Chronicles 16:1-13

In the thirty-sixth year of Asa, Israel's King Baasha went to war against Judah. He built Ramah in order to keep anyone from leaving or coming to King Asa of Judah. **2** So Asa brought out the silver and gold from the treasuries of the LORD's temple and the royal palace and sent it to Aram's King Ben-hadad, who lived in Damascus, saying, **3** "There's a treaty between me and you, between my father and your father. Look, I have sent you silver and gold. Go break your treaty with Israel's King Baasha so that he will withdraw from me."

4 Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies to the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali. **5** When Baasha heard about it, he quit building Ramah and stopped his work. **6** Then King Asa brought all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and the timbers Baasha had built it with. Then he built Geba and Mizpah with them.

7 At that time, the seer Hanani came to King Asa of Judah and said to him, "Because you depended on the king of Aram and have not depended on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from you. **8** Were not the Cushites and Libyans a vast army with many chariots and horsemen? When you depended on the LORD, he handed them over to you. **9** For the eyes of the LORD roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him. You have been foolish in this matter. Therefore, you will have wars from now on." **10** Asa was enraged with the seer and put him in prison because of his anger over this. And Asa mistreated some of the people at that time.

11 Note that the events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. **12** In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa developed a disease in his feet, and his disease became increasingly severe. Yet even in his disease he didn't seek the LORD but only the physicians. **13** Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign. **14** He was buried in his own tomb that he had made for himself in the city of David. They laid him out in a coffin that was full of spices and various mixtures of prepared ointments; then they made a great fire in his honor.

The Introduction:

In 1945 Billy Graham seemingly came out of nowhere and began filling auditoriums across America, preaching to as many as 30,000 per night. But in 1945, there were two other preachers that were packing auditoriums. Their names were Chuck Templeton and Bron Clifford. Both were accomplishing the same thing as Billy Graham and even more.

One seminary president, after hearing Templeton preach to an audience of thousands, called him “the most gifted and talented young man in America today for preaching.” In 1946, the National Association of Evangelicals published an article on men who were best used of God in that organization’s five-year existence. The article highlighted the ministry of Chuck Templeton. Billy Graham was not even mentioned.

The other gentleman, Bron Clifford, was gaining his own attention as well. Clifford was 25 years old in 1945. Many people believed that he was the most gifted preacher the church had seen in centuries. In 1945, Clifford preached to a packed auditorium in Miami with people lined up 10 deep outside who could not get in the building. One national leader wrote, “At the age of 25 young Clifford touched more lives, influenced more leaders, and set more attendance records than any other clergyman his age in American history.”

Now we all know the name Billy Graham, but I suspect only a few have heard the name Chuck Templeton and maybe only one or two have heard the name Bron Clifford. All three sprinted out of the starting blocks like rockets. Why is it that we are not familiar with the names Templeton and Clifford?

Why is it that for some people their walk with Christ resembles a roller coaster ride? Some days they are soaring with the eagles, but other days you might not even recognize them as being a Christian. Why is it that some people who were once very close to the Lord begin to “drift from God?” The answer lies in this phrase, “those whose heart is loyal to Him” or as the New American Standard puts it, “whose heart is completely His.”

Our text says it so clearly, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” Is your heart totally loyal, totally surrendered to Him? Can you say without any hesitation “my heart belongs completely to God?”

The Challenge to Maintain a Heart that is Completely His

The challenge to maintain a heart that is completely His is actually found in the background of the story of King Asa’s life. The irony of what we read in chapter 16 is that at one time, we could say that King Asa’s heart was loyal to God. In chapter 14 and 15, we see at least five evidences of a heart devoted to God.

1. A heart that is loyal to God **deals** seriously with sin. (14:2-5)

2 Asa did what was good and right in the sight of the LORD his God. **3** He removed the pagan altars and the high places. He shattered their sacred pillars and chopped down their Asherah poles. **4** He told the people of Judah to seek the LORD God of their ancestors and to carry out the instruction and the commands. **5** He also removed the high places and the shrines from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom experienced peace under him.

2. A heart that is loyal to God enjoys **divine blessing**. (14:6-8)

⁶ Because the land experienced peace, Asa built fortified cities in Judah. No one made war with him in those days because the LORD gave him rest. ⁷ So he said to the people of Judah, "Let's build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, with doors and bars. The land is still ours because we sought the LORD our God. We sought him and he gave us rest on every side." So they built and succeeded.

⁸ Asa had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah bearing large shields and spears, and two hundred eighty thousand from Benjamin bearing regular shields and drawing the bow. All these were valiant warriors.

3. A heart that is loyal to God **depends** on God. (14:9-11)

⁹ Then Zerah the Cushite came against them with an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. They came as far as Mareshah. ¹⁰ So Asa marched out against him and lined up in battle formation in Zephathah Valley at Mareshah.

¹¹ Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God: "LORD, there is no one besides you to help the mighty and those without strength. Help us, LORD our God, for we depend on you, and in your name we have come against this large army. LORD, you are our God. Do not let a mere mortal hinder you."

4. A heart that is loyal to God is **devoted** to obedience. (15:1-15, especially 8-15)

⁸ When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet, he took courage and removed the abhorrent idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He renovated the altar of the LORD that was in front of the portico of the LORD's temple. ⁹ Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, as well as those from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing among them, for they had defected to him from Israel in great numbers when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. ¹⁰ They were gathered in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. ¹¹ At that time they sacrificed to the LORD seven hundred cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from all the plunder they had brought. ¹² Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their ancestors with all their heart and all their soul. ¹³ Whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel would be put to death, young or old, man or woman. ¹⁴ They took an oath to the LORD in a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets, and with rams' horns. ¹⁵ All Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn it with all their mind. They had sought him with all their heart, and he was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.

5. A heart that is loyal to God **demand**s obedience from others. (15:16)

¹⁶ King Asa also removed Maacah, his grandmother, from being queen mother because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. Asa chopped down her obscene image, then crushed it and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

Yet in spite of all the good that can be said about King Asa, we must conclude that his heart did not completely belong to God. What happened? We do not fully know, but his story ought to serve as a serious warning to us.

Key Point: Your devotion to God in the past does not guarantee your devotion today. Your devotion to God today does not guarantee your devotion to Him in the future.

The Consequences of a Heart that is Not Completely His:

When our heart does not completely belong to Him, we will begin to ...

1. **Rely** on our own strength. (16:1-7)
2. **Restrict** the blessings of God. (16:8-9)
3. **Reject** God's instruction. (16:10)
4. **Refuse** to seek God's help. (16:12)

The Conclusive Question about your Heart:

Asa's story prompts us to ask a serious question about our heart. Here's the question. **Is there anything in my life that does not *right now* belong to God?** That is the question we must ask if we are going to continue to be completely surrendered to God.

Total surrender. This idea of surrender is a serious thing. At the end of WWII, Germany was surrounded by the Allied Forces. A few days after Hitler's suicide, the Germans surrendered to the Allies. The actual wording of the surrender document contains these words: The German Command agrees for all German forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally. Furthermore, the Germans agreed to "carry out at once, and without argument or comment, all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject." Are you willing to say that to God?¹

Stephen Olford was a preacher I became familiar with when I was in Memphis. He died recently at the age of 86. He was born in the country of Angola to missionary parents. He rebelled against the teachings of his parents. He attended college in England to study engineering. As the result of his studies, he built and designed a powerful new motorcycle carburetor and took up motorcycle racing. One night while riding home he wrecked and lay in the damp cold for several hours before anyone found him. As a result, he developed acute pneumonia and literally lay in a hospital dying. While in the hospital he received a letter from his father. Now, understand that the letter was written before the accident. His father wrote the letter out of concern for his son's spiritual condition. In the letter, his father wrote, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." In that lonely hospital room, God touched Stephen's heart.

¹ From Sermon by David O. Dykes, "Surrender Your Trust," January 9, 2005. Information verified on web from multiple sources.

Kneeling beside that hospital bed, Olford prayed a prayer that changed his life. He prayed, "Lord, anytime, anywhere, any cost. Amen."

Is that your prayer today? Again, is there anything in your life right now that does not completely belong to God?

Conclusion: Graham, Templeton, Clifford? We all know what happened to Graham. What about Templeton? Just five years later, Templeton left the ministry to pursue a career in television and radio. By that time, Templeton had decided that the message of Christ was no longer true. By 1950, he no longer believed in the validity of the Gospel or the claims about Christ.

Bron Clifford? By 1954 he had lost his family, his ministry, his health, and even...his life. Alcohol and financial irresponsibility had taken everything. Before his death, he had left his wife and two children. At 35, the once great preacher had died from cirrhosis of the liver in a run-down motel in Amarillo, Texas. Some pastors in Amarillo took up a collection among themselves in order to purchase a casket so that his body could be buried in a cemetery for the poor.

What happened? There's lots we will never know. We must simply conclude that the heart was not completely surrendered. If that kind of thing can happen to two of the greatest preachers, I know for a fact that it could happen to any of us. That's why we must continue to ask: Is there anything in my life right now that does not completely belong to God? A habit? An attitude? A hobby? A relationship? Our family? Our finances? Anything?

The good news is that God is looking to show Himself strong to those whose heart is completely His.