



# When the FIRE Dims

Noah Olson



wrote: “When we take hold of something hot, we turn it loose quickly. The message Jeremiah had been given was like a hot item; it must be released!”[5] We must do the same. Mutual sharing is important because we might be able to find more fuel for our fire from others’ fire (2 Corinthians 9:2; Hebrews 10:24). Good news is refreshing (Proverbs 15:30; 25:25). If we are thinking about leave the Lord, let us strive to strengthen the things that remain (Revelation 3:2) and share what we know and possess with the world!

**Build a Stronger Base for the Fire (Jeremiah 20:11-13).** Fires are dependent upon solid bases. Jeremiah met his discouragement with the best foundation of all: God’s presence. He was reminded of this many times (Jeremiah 1:8, 9; 15:20). Recognizing God’s closeness is one of the most important things to do when thinking of leaving God. If God is near then we won’t want to leave Him; however, if we believe God is far away; we will never want to stay.

God is not far away at all (Acts 17:27)—for those that come to Him (Psalm 145:18). When we recognize this divine truth, we will only grow closer to Him. One song reads:

“O yes, He cares- I know He cares!  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights  
dreary, I know my Savior cares.”

When you think about leaving God, know He cares. To persecuted Christians, Peter wrote “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). When we are thinking of giving up on God, let us remember that He has not given up on us!

**You Build the Fire but Let the Fire itself do the Burning.** Jeremiah’s life was faced with unsuccessful results. Often, a lack of success often leads people to quit their plights (1 Kings 19:4, 10). Sometimes our fire dwindles because we feel as though our fire is not effecting anyone. So a normal response is just to put out the fire—or so we think. We must remember that are held accountable for our labor, not our results.[6] We cannot forget that we are not the fire. We do what we can to start the flame, keep

it, and let its heat warm others (1 Corinthians 3:6-8; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12). The fire might not move the way we want it, but we cannot control it. Our spiritual fire cannot be determined by results for if it is, it will constantly fluctuate. When we are considering giving up on God because we think our fire is not affecting anyone, let us remember that as long as we keep the fire aflame, God will do His part. A.A. Milne said “Rivers know this: there is no hurry. We shall get there some day.”

God has told us that working in the Kingdom is not easy, but we can do it. Randy Pausch said, “The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something.” Someone else observed “Triumph is just "umph" added to try.” God expects us to keep our fire going (Romans 12:11). Keeping a fire is hard work, but it isn’t impossible to maintain. How hot is your spiritual fire?

### Endnotes

- [1]Craig Brian Larson and Leadership Journal, 750 Engaging Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Writers, Baker Books, 2007, 397-398
- [2][https://www.booneopenbible.com/resources/docs/sermon\\_notes/Keep\\_the\\_Fire\\_Burning\\_06-04-23.pdf](https://www.booneopenbible.com/resources/docs/sermon_notes/Keep_the_Fire_Burning_06-04-23.pdf)
- [3]Lambert, N. M., Gwinn, A. M., Baumeister, R. F., Strachman, A., Washburn, I. J., Gable, S. L., & Fincham, F. D. (2012). A boost of positive affect: The perks of sharing positive experiences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(1), 24-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407512449400> (Original work published 2013)
- [4]Lambert, N. M., Gwinn, A. M., Baumeister, R. F., Strachman, A., Washburn, I. J., Gable, S. L., & Fincham, F. D. (2012). A boost of positive affect: The perks of sharing positive experiences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(1), 24-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407512449400> (Original work published 2013)
- [5][https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/XJ7DGK/\\_source/be09ad95-2f01-4e13-9e77-e148205eded8/document.pdf](https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/XJ7DGK/_source/be09ad95-2f01-4e13-9e77-e148205eded8/document.pdf)
- [6]Charles Spurgeon

**Is your spiritual fire dwindling? Maybe you have never started the fire through obedience to the Gospel. Contact Words Written on the Heart at 816.508.8904 or [olsonscan6@gmail.com](mailto:olsonscan6@gmail.com).**

Have you ever wanted to quit the Lord? Can you think of a time when you did not want to wake up and go to worship? Do you ever feel lethargic in evangelism, distressed to study the Bible, or undesirous to pray? Maybe you are being tempted to let your fire dim.

Abraham Lincoln said, “I am a slow walker, but I never walk back.” Charles Spurgeon said, “By perseverance the snail reached the ark.” Another observed “It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.” Thomas Edison said, “Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.”

To give up or not to give up, those are the questions. It is easy to set a goal, it is harder to accomplish it. It is easy to dream, imagine, and ponder—the hardest part is perseverance. Painting the starting and finishing line in a race is light work, but it is laying miles of pavement in between that takes diligence. For Christians, being baptized was done quickly and when they walk through Heaven’s gate it will be short, but living the Christian life in between is where the “rubber meets the road.” “During a Monday night football game between the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants, one of the announcers observed that Walter Payton, the Bears’ running back, had accumulated over nine miles in career rushing yardage. The other announcer remarked, ‘Yeah, and that’s with someone knocking him down every 4.6 yards.’”[1]

Even God’s greatest servants are not immune to discouragement or to temptations of giving up. Moses was done with Israel (Numbers 11:14). Elijah was done with life (1 Kings 19:4). Jeremiah flirted with blasphemy when sent this letter to God: “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name” (Jeremiah 20:9a)!

Jeremiah was called to preach at an early age (Jeremiah 1:5-10). His message was extremely unpopular (Jeremiah 6:15) and God warned him about the battles he would face (Jeremiah 1:19). Going back home for supper wasn’t an option for Jeremiah, his own family was against him

(Jeremiah 11:21). Frequently throughout his book, he discussed his affliction and Jeremiah chapter twenty might be the most popular. Jeremiah had a fire and it dwindled. What should we do when our fire dims?

### **Recognize What is Causing the Fire to Dwindle (Jeremiah 20:1-8, 10).**

When fire goes out there is always a cause. Fire dwindles due to a lack of oxygen, a failure to nurture it, or when outside influences like rain or sand flood upon it. Jeremiah’s fire dwindled because of the attacks he was taking. He was done with them.

If your fire is dwindling there is always a cause. When Ephesus’ fire was a mere spark (Revelation 2:4) Jesus advised them to “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen” (Revelation 2:5). Examine what is causing your fire to dwindle through these three questions:

*What is the specific problem?* For Jeremiah there were many and for us it might be one or more of the following:

- We find persecution at every turn.
- Perhaps our spiritual efforts are not as we hoped.
- People deride us for our work.
- Maybe we just don’t find any interest in serving God any longer.

Examination is the fire step of correcting any problem. Take Paul’s advice and “Examine yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

*Is this problem that big of a deal?* While Jeremiah’s problems were bad, they could have been worse. Sometimes the problem is not as bad as we thought. In fact, if we find ourselves discouraged and wanting to leave God for minor causes, what will happen when harder struggles come (Proverbs 24:10; Jeremiah 12:5). Quitting the Lord is not the answer to trials; it’s a change of perspective that is (Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:12-16).

*What might I be doing that is contributing to this problem?* Jeremiah focused on himself through his complaint, a common trait of suffering humans indeed. Maybe our fire is dwindling because of person choices like:

- Personal sin.

- Interest in leaving the world.
- Love for riches.
- Desire to look backward (cf. Luke 9:62).
- Undesirous to obey Jesus.

Whatever it might be; we need to burn the fat.[2]

The first step in overcoming the temptation to leave God is to examine why we feel the way we do.

### **Feed the Fire (Jeremiah 20:9a).**

Physical fire will dwindle without careful attention; spiritual fire lives with the same determination. Jeremiah felt like leaving God but despite this desire he still felt the heat of the Word of God. It was this that kept him from stumbling (cf. Psalm 37:31; 119:11).

If our flame is dwindling, then we need to ignite it once again with a divine spark (Luke 24:32). Go to three different fires to revive your soul:

- Build your own fire at home—Personal study. How can you stay warm if your house is never heated? Read the Bible every day and do a deeper dive every night.
- Find a local fire and go every time its lit—Local Bible studies, worship services, gospel meetings, etc. Smaller fires may go out if more flame is not applied.
- Travel far to bonfires—Lectureships and seminars. Meeting new people with hearts aflame may encourage your fire to increase.

It is the Spirit’s words that increase our fire (Psalm 119:50, 93; John 6:63, 68; Hebrews 4:12). If you are tempted to leave God—get in the book!

### **Share the Fire (Jeremiah 20:9b).**

Research done by Nathanel Lambert others observed that the sharing of news can actually make us happier. They summarized their study saying “In sum, our findings suggest that positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction reach a peak only when participants share their positive experiences and when the relationship partner provides an active-constructive response.”[3] Someone said, “Happiness held is the seed; happiness shared is the flower.”[4] Jeremiah did not keep the Word of God in; he felt compelled to share it. Bob Winton