

# Heat Seeking

## *Firing Up Frozen Faith*

September 17, 2023

**Today we're learning to practice the power of perseverance!** Because as we heard last week, faith is an action that *warms* us up to righteousness – *but* it takes *ongoing effort* to fuel a fire that can push us *through* the *everyday* pains of change. So, to personalize a *plan* with *that* purpose, let's all start by taking our *temperature* with a couple of questions: **How hot is your faith?** And *whatever* the answer, for reference, **is it heating up or cooling down?**



Back when *my* faith first caught fire, every single day was a wild ride full of unexpected twists and unbelievable turns. One day, I was calling cops to break up a brawl while bartending and the next I was filing financial aid for Bible school. I went from serving *spirits* to serving *The Spirit* overnight and the more my fire for ministry grew, the more I heard one warning; **be careful not to burn out.** *What?! C'mon guys – we're working to save the world! How could that ever lose its excitement!* Well, for some reason, it happens to believers... *a lot.* Like the followers that Jesus predicts will turn toward false prophets:



The love of many **[believers]** will grow cold. – Matthew 24:12



And although it's hard to imagine cooling off back in a time when Jesus's ministry was first spreading like wildfire, **we need to hear how easy it is for even the most dedicated believers to burn out.** Take King David. I mean just listen to what God, Himself said about this kid's faith:



'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' - Acts 13:22 NIV

*Wow!* Well, if God says *this* is *the* poster boy for faith in action, no chance he ever strays from serving, *right?* Then what's with the time he goes all '*peeping tom*' on Bathsheba, has an affair, and gets her husband killed to cover up his illegitimate love child! Like God says:

I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in His eyes?

**[Yeah David, What happened?!]** - 2 Samuel 12:8-9 NIV

*Well, it's* the same thing that throws every other believer off the rails if we're not careful; *nothing.* **Doing nothing freezes our faith.** And if our faith ain't in motion, it's as good as dead. Because down here, entropy rules, and anything left alone goes the way of this world; toward destruction, decay, and death. So to swim against that current, it takes ongoing effort just to stay in place – while every *pause* pulls us downriver toward the death we're trying to escape. That's why *stagnating* and *languishing* are bad words; *down here, if things aren't pushing forward, they are pulled under.* And in the same way, **all fires go out if they're not fed;** even in our faith.

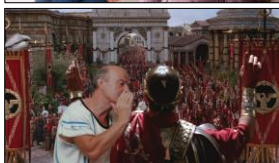


However, as Christians, **we tend to focus on starting fires more than sustaining them!** Because lighting is always more exciting than just *adding* other logs. But the truth is, **lighting anything up doesn't matter if you let it burn out.** What good was David's faith if it wasn't pushing him to do God's will? Is *cold* faith any better than *no* faith? Peter says:

If [believers] *have* escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are *again* entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. [Uh-oh! Cold sounds worse!] - 2 Peter 2:20 NIV

Like Bruce said, it's critical to know God's Word to grow fire in your faith cuz **you can't believe what you don't know.** But even if you *have* heard His Word, **you don't know what you don't remember.** *Forgetting* pulls us right back to where we began; the only difference is, we can no longer blame our failure on ignorance. *We're* now *responsible* for the cold!

*Just like David!* Early on, this was God's guy cuz he had the fire in his faith to follow God's *lead*, whether it meant killing unbeatable *giants* or winning impossible *wars*. But by the time of his big Bathsheba blunder, he let his faith grow so cold that he was blind to his own deceit, adultery, and murder! So how do we avoid the same subtle force that froze his faith? Well, I'll give you three things: we can **take our temperature**, **remember our reasons**, and **defend our fire.**



So, how do we **take our temperature**? You're doing it right now. It happens every time we **reexamine our relationship with God.** But it takes three *perspectives* to get a good reading; *yours*, *others'*, and *God's*. And it all begins with *us*, because every morning we can **ask ourselves where we're at with our Lord.** The only *hard* part is the *honesty*. Has the fire you felt in your honeymoon *faded* and left you with a *flickering* flame? Don't be *afraid* to admit it, cuz as anyone who's been married more than a minute can tell you, **it takes effort to keep that fire burning!** Not necessarily because of anything anyone *did* – but because of what someone *didn't*. So seriously consider, have *you* been *acting* like long-term love-birds with the Lord or *have you let yourself grow distant*?

And then **ask others for their input** because, like David, **we can become blind to our own actions.** And it takes the perspective of those *around* us to *help* us see objectively. And when we add *their* take to our *own* assessment, **it's called accountability.** When we *don't*, **it's called vanity;** and it can lead us to believe we're doing *better* than we *are*.

There's a great example of this back in Jesus' day – cuz Romans were so *dominant* that their generals would start to *believe* perhaps... *they were gods*. So they assigned a slave to ride *with* them and *continually* whisper, **"Memento Mori"** which meant, **"Remember you are mortal"** So, don't *you* forget how important *other* opinions are; they might be the key to seeing what you're missing.

And finally, don't forget to **ask God how He sees your relationship**, because *He's* the other half of it! Every day we should use *His* Word and *your* prayer to make sure *you're* living up to *His* standard.

Because there's nothing *sadder* than only one member of a marriage thinking they have a good relationship. *That* means *someone hasn't heard or won't hear something* that has the power to pull them *away* from the love of their life! So *ask* Him the hard questions: ***Have I let you down? Could I communicate better? Do you feel loved?***

And *after* your examination, just ***give those cold spots your attention and watch 'em warm up!*** Cuz it turns out *fire* and *faith* are a lot like *muscles* and *memory* – use 'em or lose 'em! So *everyday*, give faith *more* focus cuz we raise our temperature when we simply ***remember our reasons!***

[Cuz even if *this world* starts pulling us away, that's when:] *We demolish* arguments and every pretension that sets itself up *against* the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. - 2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV



But exactly ***how do we do that?*** Let's ask the expert, Peter. Cuz he's the *mascot* for forgetful hot and cold faith. This is the guy can go from *roaring fire* to *cold-hearted liar* faster than you can say *Sanhedrin* – cutting off ears to *defend* Jesus one minute and then *denying* he's ever met Him the *next*. No wonder Jesus calls him *Satan* one minute, and the foundation of His *church* the next! So when it's time for this *rollercoaster* of a disciple to share what he's *learned*, guess the *theme* in *both* his books of the Bible?

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. - 2 Peter 3:1 NIV

**Reminders!** Faith *won't* happen when we *forget* and no one knows how valuable godly *reminders* are like Peter! They're just the thing we *all* need to *consistently capture* thoughts and *turn* them to God. And if you wanna throw *gas* on your faith's fire, here's reminder number one: You. Remember when *your* faith was *first* fired up? ***What did it? Hope in your hardship? Peace in your chaos? Clarity in your confusion?*** Think back...

Because *however* it manifested in your life, ***that was just one little part of the real big reason; love.*** You got a *glimpse* of God's love when you *experienced* any of *its* incredible *effects* and loved *that* feeling so much that *you* decided to *dedicate* your life to *loving* Him back! If you forget *that*, it's all too easy for your faith to go cold. Cuz without *that* reason, ***you can appear close to the Lord but lack real warmth in your relationship.*** Like the church in Ephesus God rebukes:

I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. - Revelation 2:4-5 NIV

So don't *ever* forget the reason *you* first *opened* His *book*, *believed* what it *said*, or *came through* these *doors!* Every time *you* look in the mirror or hear *your* name – ***remember the love that changed your life!*** And if you need *more* reminders to capture *those* thoughts, well Peter goes on:

I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. - 2 Peter 3:2 NIV

**AKA – get in your BIBLE!** It's the big book that tells all about *your* personal love story! So, **to keep the fire in your relationship, keep His Word in your heart.** After all, *that's* what we *do* with love letters when our loved one is *away!* While you're *down here*, grab hold of those thoughts that *first* fired you up and *don't let go!* Cuz *then*, all you have to do is **defend your fire.**



Remember, *without* the ongoing effort to fight against the natural force of a *broken* world, the fire in our faith *goes out.* **Down here, righteousness is not automatic, love takes work, and victory is never an accident.** So, *while* we're here, **we need a practical plan to protect our faith.** Cuz I'm sorry to say it, but the force of this world is *relentless* and since the *start*, every second anybody ever *dropped* their defense, damage *has* been done.



**[Remember how God warned Cain?]** If you do what is *right*, will you not be accepted? But if you do *not* do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." - Genesis 4:7 NIV



**And that's what it all comes down to – a power struggle with sin.** This world is *always* and *only* pulling things *away* from *perfect* with the *power* of *sin.* And in the same way we have to swim *upstream* or be *swept away*, **we have to master sin or sin will be our master.** Because it's all around, just waiting to *snuff* you out in one way or another. In *David's* case, it was on the *roof* taking a bath!



So **where's sin crouching in your life? By the water cooler as a little gossip? Online in an adult website? Or in your marriage as a little lie?** Ask yourself, cuz it's somewhere *close*, just waiting for you to *slip up* so it can *slip in!* And **the second any sin gets in, all sin gets harder to keep out.**

So *how do we defend our fire from such smothering?* Well, that's the thing, we *don't.* In case you missed it, we've *all* gone head-to-head with sin and *lost... a lot.* Because the truth is, we don't have the *strength* to spend every minute fighting this world to keep our faith. So *how* do we *win* when we're *obviously* outmatched? Well Jesus says it's *easy*; just **call for reinforcements:**

With man this *is* impossible, but *with God* all things are possible. - Matthew 19:26 NIV

And *here's* where we see *why* David gets to be the poster boy for faith cuz *he* learned the *secret* to staying warm; **let the Lord light your fire when you're too tired.** So He asks God:

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a *willing* spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, so that sinners will turn back to You. - Psalm 51:12-13 NIV

And when we just read *that*, David's mission is accomplished *in this church in real time!* Cuz *we are recalling* the words that remind us to remember our reasons and take the temperature of our faith! And our fire is safe from sin cuz when we're in His Word, we're with a God who makes it possible! So if you've let *your* faith begin to *burn out* cuz you're too *tired* to *fight* for your fire, **take today to turn to His Word, turn over control, and remember the relationship that can reignite you!** Cuz:

**Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength ... they will run and not grow weary.** - Isaiah 40:31 NIV

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Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.