



**When you need a
promise...**

**...open your
Bible!**

*Sermons on Bible Promises
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“CLAIM THIS PROMISE... WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING!”

TEXT: Rev. 2:10

INTRO: A. This series of messages on “CLAIMING THE PROMISES” will not just focus on the promises themselves, but on how they can help us in times of special need. Every believer needs to learn how to identify and apply the promises in God’s Word.

B. This is the age of drop outs, flop outs and quitters. Sadly, even among Christians the drop out rate is high. Surely there will be very few who will hear our Savior’s words: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

C. Ivor Powell said: “If the Christian life is compared with a race, then the athlete must remember the finish line is not halfway down the course. A runner who desires a trophy must continue – to the end!” The student who gets the diploma must finish the course. The Christian life, like marriage is a life-long commitment.

D. Today we will deal with the concept of quitting. Synonyms for “quitting” are abandon, forsake, cease, or leave. The suggestion relates to those who stop before completion.

TRANS: Paul probably thought about those who were formerly co-laborers with him, while he sat in prison. No doubt he remembered with tears, his former companion, Demas...

I. DEMAS, THE QUITTER:

2 Tim. 4:10

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

A. A Negative Example:

1. There is no doubt that we have more Demas’ in the church than we have Daniels.
 - a. Demas’ problem was carnality.
 - b. Demas’ problem was love for his former lifestyle.

ILLUS: How many make professions of faith and for a while leave the world, only to later be pulled back into it because they found the life of faith too stringent, too narrow, too hard. They gave up the fight and went back to their former lifestyle. They got in thinking that it would be easy, but didn’t have the backbone to continue, because they found that it was warfare.

In Demas’ case he no doubt saw Paul end up in prison and decided he didn’t want to go there!

2. It is sad that there are so many Phygellus’ and so few Pauls.

2 Tim. 1:15

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

- a. It always hurts when those with whom you once labored drift away.
- b. It is such a blessing to see those who not only “stay by the stuff” but who also hold up your hands and minister to your needs.

2 Tim. 1:16

The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:

c. Thank God for the Onesiphorus' in the ministry; what a refreshment they are!

ILLUS: Powell sums up Demas' life and ministry in four words: delight, distraction, departure, and disappointment. What a commentary on so many Demas' today. They come in rejoicing, get pulled away by the magnetic attraction of the world and end up going back - back to what?? If it was so good, why did they leave in the first place? The Demas' are always those who break the preacher's (and the Lord's) heart. He not only lost his friendship with Paul and his ministry, he also lost his contentment and crown! Think of what he could have been. Think of the ministry he could have had.

Bible researchers date the books of Philemon and Colossians about the same time. When those two books, which both mention Demas, were written, Demas was a profitable servant.

Philemon 1:24

Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

Col. 4:14

Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

TRANS: If you don't want to become a quitter, claim our text verse! Make it you life verse!

Rev. 2:10b

...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

II. JOHN MARK, THE TURN COAT:

A. A Disappointing Example:

Acts 15:37-40

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

1. Mark started out so well. Acts 12:12 (a prayer warrior); Acts 12:25 (a fellow missionary)
2. We are not told what caused his defection and subsequent disaffection, but whatever it was left a bitter taste in Paul's mouth.
3. He was no longer considered trustworthy by Paul.

ILLUS: Principle: Decisions you make will haunt you later on. Principle: Actions you take will establish your reputation for life, in the minds of some. A reputation lost is nearly impossible to regain.

- a. Paul refused to take John Mark with him for fear he would quit on him again.
- b. We read again and again of Paul and Barnabas, and Paul and Timothy, and even Paul and Silas, but never Paul and John Mark!

ILLUS: Opportunities lost may never be regained. Ministries lost may never be regained. Surely unless some claim our text verse tonight, we will have some Demas' and a few John Mark's among us!

Someone has likened the opportunities of service to that of diamonds. If a diamond could speak it might complain of the harsh treatment it received the hands of the diamond cutter and polisher. There is a great difference between the stone found in the mines and the jewel of exquisite beauty placed in a royal crown! John wrote: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is." I John 3:2 The believer who quits or turns back is like the diamond who rejects the cutter and polisher. Therefore "be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." 1 Cor.15:58

Contrast Demas and John Mark with the great Apostle Paul who wrote at the end of his life and ministry, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Paul made mistakes, but from the day of his Damascus road experience when he met the Savior, till the day he met that same Savior again in heaven at the end of his earthly life and ministry, he never faltered! Paul would have no doubt appreciated the moral of the little poem:

"Two frogs fell into a deep cream bowl; one was an optimistic soul,
But the other took the gloomy view, "We shall drown!" he cried without adieu.
So with a last despairing cry, He flung up his legs and said "Goodbye!"
Quote the other frog with a merry grin. "I can't get out, but I won't give in;
I'll swim around 'til my strength is spent, Then will I die the more content."
Bravely he swam 'til it would seem – his struggles began to churn the cream.
On the top of the butter at last he stopped, and out of the bowl he gaily hopped.
What is the moral? It's easily found, If you can't hop out, keep swimming around!"

CONCL: So, "CLAIM THIS PROMISE...WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING!" We have more than enough sitters, quitters and other critters in the church. We need more men, women and teens who refuse to quit or turn back.

Christians need the tenacity and stubbornness of a Winston Churchill, who, when the island of England was threatened by Nazi Germany, said:

"We shall fight to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields, and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender... we shall never, never, never, never quit..." June 4, 1940

May God give us Christians who will vow to keep on fighting till their last breath. We need believers whose motto is "We shall never, never, never, never surrender!"

"The Benefits of Failure"

TEXT: Lk. 22:32

INTRO: A. For the serious saint, nothing is more disturbing than a feeling of failure the feeling you have failed the Lord, your family, your friends, yourself. Adding to the frustration is the knowledge that the failure was caused by our pride, arrogance, or over-confidence. We thought "This could never happen to me."

B. In Lk. 22:31-33 Peter expresses over-confidence in his flesh and perhaps physical strength. I see Peter as a physically strong man, a swarthy fisherman, a real man's man, as the world judges. (He apparently had a vocabulary to match!) But God's evaluation of strength is not the same as ours. He demands moral courage and spiritual strength, under testing. Christ knew Peter's propensity at failure and his extra large ego, so He prophesied of his upcoming spiritual defeat and gave him a promise. What a promise: "...I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

I. GOD'S GRACE VS. OUR GUILT:

A. Living With Past Failures:

1. Peter was feeling so strong that day when he verbally pledged his loyalty to the Lord...and he no doubt meant every word of that pledge.
2. But Peter underestimated the flesh; it was one thing to look into the Savior's eyes and derive strength and quite another to look into the maiden's eyes later as he warmed himself by the enemy's fire.
3. It is one thing to boast about loyalty when with other believers and quite another thing when you are among the lost.
 - a. The test of our faith and loyalty to Christ doesn't come in church, it comes at the work-place.
 - b. The day Peter denied the Lord was a turning point in Peter's life and service; it was the day his ego died!

ILLUS: The subtitle of this message is "THE BENEFITS OF FAILURE." Perhaps the Lord will use your failure to witness to strengthen your trust in Him. Maybe He will use your failure to love as you should to enable you to be more compassionate later. Possibly your failure will be the best thing that could happen to you to make you a better Christian, a better witness, a better and more consistent believer.

- c. Peter could have simply quit on the Lord because of his failure, instead he did not live in the past and dwell on failure, but rather used his failure as a lesson on the weakness of the flesh and the need for the fullness of the Spirit.

B. Clinging To God's Promises:

1. In Jesus' promise to Peter was the realization of his possible failure.
2. But there was also the assurance that good could come even from failure.

ILLUS: The Lord "knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." Ps.103:14 Peter should have listened instead of talked! What the Lord has to say is far more important than what Peter says or thinks (or what we say or think)! We need to find the promises, then cling to them. Every believer needs to be a promise seeker before he can become a "promise keeper." He also needs to acknowledge that he can only keep promises if supernaturally enabled; that the only real Promise Keeper is the Lord!

II. GOD'S DESIRE VS. OUR DISTRESS:

A. A Failure May Be A Beginning:

1. The day Peter sinned was probably the lowest point in his life.
2. Peter probably believed his ministry was over, when it was just beginning.
3. The Lord's prayer for Peter would be answered; (note that Peter's cooperation was necessary).
 - a. Sometimes the most difficult thing is to forgive ourselves.
 - b. We need to learn that God's forgiveness is available and work on our forgiveness as well.
 - c. God's desire is to relieve our distress by getting us to a point of rededication, as with Peter. John 21:15-17
 - d. The good news is that Peter became the strongest preacher among the original twelve and the most famous due to his ministry.
 - e. Peter's bitter tears of remorse, regret and repentance were necessary, but he needed to "get over" his failure!

ILLUS: If we dwell on our failure instead of on His forgiveness we will continue to be failures!

B. A Failure May Be An Opportunity:

1. God's desire is to restore each failing disciple to a place of renewed and perhaps even greater service.
2. The fact that you fail once and rebound is no guarantee that you will never fail again; even after the resurrection it was Peter who told the other disciples:
3. "I go a fishing" (returning to his former occupation)...it was also Peter who messed up when the Jews came and Paul had to rebuke him.

Gal. 2:11-12

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

4. Again and again Peter's failures taught him lessons and opened up greater opportunities for service for him.

III. GOD'S FORGIVENESS VS. OUR FAILURES:

A. God Uses Failures:

ILLUS: If God never used failures, He would have no one to use! Some notable biblical failures were Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samson, Jonah, David, Jeremiah, Peter, Thomas, John Mark, etc. In fact the men God used about whom no failure is recorded are few indeed: Joseph, Daniel and ???

B. Failures May Be Steppingstones:

1. God is in the forgiveness business; if we never failed, He could not demonstrate His forgiveness.
2. Forgiveness is extended to failures; they only continue to be failures if they refuse to accept His forgiveness!
 - a. Peter failed, but accepted forgiveness and saw 3000 saved at Pentecost thru his preaching.
 - b. Jonah failed but accepted forgiveness and saw an entire city saved.

- c. John Mark failed but accepted forgiveness, recovered and continued to serve faithfully with Barnabas.
- d. Even Samson, the most flagrant failure of God's servants, accepted God's forgiveness and served Him with one final act of dedication.

CONCL: Should we be ashamed when we fail? Absolutely! Should we shed tears of repentance, remorse and regret? Yes! Should we accept God's forgiveness and cleansing and continue to serve. Positively! Why not "CLAIM THIS PROMISE...WHEN YOU FAIL?" God is no respecter of persons and if He can forgive Peter and use Him, He can do the same for you!

WHEN YOU FEEL UNWORTHY

TEXT: 1 Tim. 1:15

INTRO: A. The reason the spiritual saint feels unworthy is because he is! In fact when you feel you are worthy, you are not. Complacency kills. Self-satisfaction stifles spiritual growth. Our unworthiness allows Christ to be glorified in us. "Not me, but Christ" should be our cry.

B. John. The Baptist had the proper concept. "He must increase, I must decrease." He said he wasn't even worth to tie Jesus' shoes! The subject should feel unworthy to stand in the presence of the great King; the servant before his good Master; the creature before the Creator. We are indeed unworthy. But there is a difference between being unworthy and feeling unworthy. We may be unprofitable servants, but we should nevertheless be servants. We may be unworthy Christians but we should be useful Christians. We may be imperfect saints, but we should be useable saints. We may be sinning believers, but we should be strong believers.

TRANS: Paul felt as every believer should...that he was "the chief of sinners."

I. A DUBIOUS DISTINCTION: "chief of sinners..."

A. A Definite Mistake:

1. This was the same man who wrote to the Philippian church that he was "as touching the Law, blameless..."
 - a. Paul had outwardly followed God and kept the Law of Moses.
 - b. But inwardly his motives were wrong and his attitude was one of Pharisaical pride.
 - c. Paul not only appeared moral and good, he was!
 - d. But his goodness was just that, his goodness, not God's!
2. When he got saved he appropriated the imputed righteousness of Christ.

ILLUS: An illustration of imputation is when I take off my coat and give it to someone else and make it theirs. Or better still, when I give my credit card to someone else and tell them whatever they spend will be charged to my account.

Philemon 1:18

If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

3. Paul was surely NOT the greatest sinner of all (e.g., Judas), but realized that when it came to righteousness of his own, he was indeed a “chief of sinners.

- a. After he got saved he strove to have even “a conscience void of offense.”
- b. Paul knew that standing in the radiance of the Light of the world, no one could hide the blemishes on his record; he was no longer walking in darkness. (“A man in total darkness sees nothing.”)

II. A MARVELOUS MESSAGE: “...a faithful saying”

A. A Unique Concept:

1. Paul believed the Gospel message to be unique.
2. Many other messages were being preached, but “THIS is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance...”
 - a. The Romans taught that might was right, but left their slaves in chains.
 - b. They believed their emperor was a god, but his conduct was atrocious.
 - c. The Saducees believed death was the end of existence and when they died they died as dogs with out hope of anything eternal.
 - d. The Pharisees believed in personal merit and created innumerable laws left men enslaved.
 - e. The Greeks worshipped many gods, but were never sure of anything, thus their statue to “the unknown god.”
3. Paul argues for the uniqueness of the Gospel message; that it alone could have and was thus worthy of “all acceptance.”
4. Paul is stating that only the Gospel message can transform a life and offer an eternity in heaven with the Lord.

ILLUS: Even today this is an offense to others. The religionists and cultists consider us to be arrogant. How dare we claim that Christ is the only way to heaven? What about the Jews, the Muslims, the Mormons, the New Agers, the Hindus, the Confusianists, et. al.?

III. A MEANINGFUL MISSION: “...Christ Jesus came...to save sinners”

A. The Good News:

1. Paul now reveals what makes the message unique: Christ came! He did not rise from the ranks of men, he descended from heaven!
 - a. This speaks of pre-existence and a direct act of His own volition.
 - b. This speaks of a Savior Who is Deity.
 - c. This speaks of the fact that He chose to come to earth.
 - d. This speaks of His purpose and His power.

NOTE: The bad news is that we are unworthy. The good news is that He is worthy! The bad news is that because we are sinners we cannot save ourselves. The good news is that He came “to save sinners.” And that He can do this because He is NOT a sinner.

2. Paul also reveals the concept of forgiveness.

- a. Since we are unworthy sinners, forgiveness must be a part of the salvation package.
- b. Forgiveness in salvation is not to be equated with human forgiveness which merely forgoes a penalty or charge. "I forgive your debt to me."
- c. Divine forgiveness is "one of the most complicated and costly undertakings, demanding complete satisfaction to meet the demands of God's outraged holiness." Unger
- d. Forgiveness is the negative aspect of salvation; imputation of God's righteousness is the positive side.
- e. There is no salvation with out forgiveness, but we don't simply need our record expunged, we need positive righteousness in our standing before God.

ILLUS: Let's suppose I forgive your debt against me. That doesn't change your relationship to me. But if after forgiveness, I also extend you credit, we establish a different relationship. You may be thankful for forgiveness, but you will now have a different attitude towards me. That's what salvation does.

CONCL: You may not be literally the "chief of sinners" in that you are as bad as you could be. But your debt to God was as great as that of Saddam Hussein, Yassar Arafat, and Adolf Hitler (combined!). When measured against God's holiness, perfection, sinlessness, and righteousness, the picture changes dramatically.

It is far better for us to say we are the greatest sinner than to believe we are the greatest saint! When you feel unworthy, claim this promise...it is a promise of a Savior Who can save even the "chief of sinners" – an has! It is a promise both of forgiveness and imputed righteousness!

"CLAIM THIS PROMISE WHEN YOUR SHIP IS SINKING"

TEXT: Acts 27:22-25

INTRO: A. 70+ miles from shore off Cape May, 30 ft. waves, in a 53 ft. boat, darkness, powerful wind and waves battering us – 8 fishermen (5 preachers!) and 2 crew members. It was very quiet as we huddled inside the cramped cabin, except for a large ice-filled chest sliding and slamming back and forth across the deck, the creaking of the hull as it was first lifted high on the crest of the wave and then slammed down into the valley, the whining of the engines as the props cleared the water...Nearby another ship would sink. It seemed an eternity but our ordeal only lasted a few hours.

B. In our text for 14 long days and nights, the wind howled, the waves crashed, the chilling rain beat the bodies of the 276 passengers, no doubt fearful and huddled together into small groups; even the seasoned sailors and captain were helpless and probably hopeless. Day after long day they were brutally battered...silence prevailed, hope of survival was fading...then Paul breaks the silence.

TRANS: Paul's words of hope shone like a lighthouse from an otherwise dark coastline. They still give hope to those whose ship seems to be sinking...

I. GOD ISN'T FINISHED WITH US YET: v.24

ILLUS: You say: "How do you know?" Because we are still here!

A. An Unfinished Ministry:

1. Paul was given a promise by God that he would stand “before Caesar.”
2. Paul knew he could safely trust in God’s promise as long as he stayed with in God’s will.

ILLUS: Every believer is immortal as long as God hasn’t finished with him or her and they stay with in His will. Are YOU in His will? Has He given you a ministry? It may not be “full time service” – it could be just raising your family! Teaching your S.S. class. Captaining your bus route... Your ship may go down, but you won’t go down with it! You can only fall into the protection of the everlasting arms of God’s tender love. Many live as prodigals and only remember God in times of extreme circumstances, but it was not desperation that caused Paul to pray, it was total dependence upon his heavenly Father.

B. Unfinished Lives:

1. We don’t have a record of the others getting saved, but I believe there is sufficient evidence that they may have trusted Paul’s Savior.
2. In any event they were given another chance and an opportunity to trust Him.

ILLUS: It is beneficial for unsaved people to “hang out” with God’s people! Their lives were spared because of Paul and Luke. (Cf. I Cor. 7:13-16)

Scripture teaches that our lives have an outer limit set by God, beyond which we cannot live, but that we can set the inner limit by stupid things we do (drugs, booze, etc.), sins we commit, etc.

II. GOD’S PROMISES SHINE IN THE DARKNESS: v.25

A. A Beacon of Hope:

1. Talk about good news! Paul’s annct. of God’s promise raised the hopes of everyone on board – at least those who believed that Paul wasn’t lying.
2. Note the irony in Paul’s initial statement of “I told you so” in v.21.
 - a. Though he doesn’t “rub their noses in it” – he basically is asking “Have you had enough yet...will you trust me now?”
 - b. While the others were despairing, Paul was praying.
 - c. Paul believed that God even held the wind and waves in His hand and that even if the ship did sink, God could still save whomever He pleased.

ILLUS: Every believer needs to trust his heavenly Father and be assured that He is concerned about the details of his life! Not only concerned about those details, but in control of them!

B. A Haven of Rest:

1. After being on the restless sea, there is nothing like the feeling of stability the dry land can instantly give.
2. So it is with the promises of God; claiming His promises provide stability.
3. The world is like the restless sea and though the believer may be on the same sinking ship, he has a resource that the unsaved don’t have, that provide stability they cannot otherwise know.

III. GOD’S PURPOSES MUST BE FULFILLED: v.24a,26

A. The Completion of an Unfinished Journey:

1. Note that there are steps along the plan of God for each believer's life and though it may appear that things are going awry, that step too may be necessary.
2. It seemed that Paul was taking a very circuitous route to get to Rome, but he was nonetheless destined to finish his journey. Cf. v.11-14, v.16
3. When Paul finally arrives in Rome he is put under house arrest for 2 yrs.
 - a. Remember that Paul had appealed to Caesar previously.
 - b. The entire Roman Govt. was put on hold so Paul could get to Rome!
 - c. God's plan for his servant would be fulfilled regardless of the cost to the world!

B. A Temporary Port in a Storm:

1. An old Scottish woman said: "If you thatch your house in the summer, you need not fear in the winter."
2. There is a great difference between trust and terror.
 - a. All on board, except Paul and Luke, became terrified and had no resource for help or guidance.
 - b. He who often visits the mercy seat can find the way there even in the dark.
 - c. Paul knew that circumstances could never change the compassion of God for His servant.
 - d. This 3 month "detour" to the island of Melita resulted in miracles and in many trusting the Lord.

IV. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SAFE and SECURE: v.24-25

A. Within His Will:

1. God had revealed His will to Paul and Paul trusted God!
2. Paul simply stayed where he belonged and God was obliged to care for him.

B. Doing His Work:

1. Paul found that even in the midst of being arrested, being a prisoner, on board a ship that was doomed, and in the middle of a horrendous storm, that he could continue to do the work God called him to.
2. In fact the entire episode was only part of a greater plan to reach people.

ILLUS: Every saint is immortal while in the center of God's will and doing His work!

CONCL: "WHEN YOUR SHIP IS SINKING, CLAIM THIS PROMISE!" Never give up on God even when things are looking bleak and even hopeless!

“CLAIM THIS PROMISE...WHEN YOUR FLAME IS DYING”

TEXT: Psalm 39:3

INTRO: A. Our jet had just taken off from Kansas City when a loud explosion caused the plane to shudder. The stewardesses strapped themselves into their seats, the passengers were fearful. After what seemed like a long time, the pilot announced that he would get back to us with more information, but that at that moment he was

“quite busy.” Finally he came back and told us we were heading back to the K.C. airport. As we were touching down, we could see emergency vehicles lining the runway with their lights flashing. Not a comforting sight. We later learned that on our 3 engine jet, the main tail engine had experienced a “flame out”! The plane could continue to fly on two engines, but it was safer not to try.

B. I have seen many Christians experience “flame outs.” They continue to function, but their main source of power is gone. They too need to return to their “home base” for repairs and not continue to try to “wing it” under their own power. They (you) need to “CLAIM THIS PROMISE...WHEN YOUR FLAME IS DYING.”

I. WARMING YOURSELF BY THE ENEMY’S FIRE:

A. ...With Peter:

Mk.14:54

54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

1. Peter had a “flame out” when he hung out with the wrong crowd.
2. The influence of the ungodly sapped his spiritual strength and turned the boisterous and bold Peter into a Christ-denying coward.
3. The greatest influence on the believer is where and with whom he or she spends their time.

ILLUS: I am not talking about the time over which you have no control, e.g., at work, etc., but rather the time which you are free to decide and choose your friends, fellowship and activity. If you spend your chosen time with positive influences your fire will burn brightly. If you read the Word, pray, work, avoid the ungodly (TV, reading material, etc.), read wholesome literature, etc. you will not have a flame out.

Peter no doubt did what was expected of him around the enemy’s fire. He denied the Lord, he used language acceptable to the crowd he was with, etc. Was Peter saved? Yes. His fire had been quenched by his associations! Yours will too!

4. Peter probably rationalized where he was based on trying to stay close to Christ, but it led him back to a lifestyle he was all too familiar with and which ensnared him again.

ILLUS: When a person gets saved, he not only changes his lifestyle, but his friends, fellowship and the places he goes. He needs to be in church with God’s people. He needs to avoid the former influences, AMAP. You can’t warm yourself by the enemy’s fire and expect to have the Lord’s fire burning with in you!

II. WARMING YOURSELF BY YOUR OWN FIRE:

A. ...With David: (text)

QUOTE: My sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me, v. 3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under; though he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and, while he was musing upon his afflictions and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit ought not to pore much, for, while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of the calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If therefore we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

1. David is having a pity party. V.1-3
2. He becomes introspective and ponders his finiteness and frailty. V.4,5
3. If you want to become a real “burnout” – just warm yourself by your own fire!

ILLUS: Dwell on your future instead of your present. Worry and fret about your impending death instead of what you can do for the Lord here and now and you will have a major “flameout”! (Note: the Lord has given us all a measure of our life at the end of our arms... “an handbreadth” – that’s it!) But the only way to prepare for the future is to live in the present!

B. ...With Elijah:

1 Kings 19:11

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

1. Here is a mighty prophet of God feeling sorry for himself.
2. Elijah thinks he is all alone in standing for the Lord, but God reminds him that he has 7000 others standing up for Him!
3. When you feel all alone in your walk, witness and service – remember that there are countless thousands of believers doing what you are doing or more!
4. When you warm yourself by your own fire, your flame will soon go out; it is mighty cool when you are all alone!

Eccl. 4:11

Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

C. ...With Nadab and Abihu:

Lev. 10:1-2

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

1. These two men weren't having a pity party, they were on a power trip!
2. These two men did what so many after them have done, they intruded into areas where they

were not called to serve and questioned God-given authority.

Lev. 9:23-24

And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

3. There is nothing wrong with desiring to serve the Lord, but you had better make sure of your calling first.
4. These two men were acting out of jealousy; they had just seen the miraculous and wanted to bask in the glory that now came to the God-called servants! Beware...!

III. WARMING YOURSELF BY THE SPIRIT'S FIRE:

A. ...With Elijah:

1. On Mt. Carmel.

1 Kings 18:38

Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

2. Re: Ahaziah. 2 Ki.1:10-14
 - a. Three times the fire of the Lord falls at Elijah's bidding here.
 - b. Elijah is ministering in the warmth and power of Holy Spirit fire!
3. At Gilgal: 2 Ki.2:11
 - a. Thank God the end of Elijah's life is not a burn out, but a blast!
 - b. He is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, pulled by horses of fire.

B. ...With Elisha: 2 Kings 2:11

1. Because he walked with God, he was warmed by God's fire.
2. If you want God's blessing, power and protection, you must do the same.

C. ...With Isaiah: Is.6:1-8

1. When you are warmed by God's fire you see your own unworthiness.
2. When you are warmed by God's fire you are able to serve Him.

CONCL: Are you warming yourself by the enemy's fire, your own fire or the Spirit's fire, tonight? When your flame is dying...claim this promise!

“WHEN YOU FIND IT HARD TO FORGIVE”

TEXT: Matthew 5:43-48

INTRO: A. Extending forgiveness is both the easiest and hardest thing you will ever do. It is easy because it is simply a matter of the will – you CAN do it if you will it. It is the most difficult because your flesh doesn’t want to forgive...it wants to retaliate or be bitter, cruel or hard.

B. “Love one another” is easy; “love your enemies” is difficult. The passage before us deals with the subject of love and forgiveness; you cannot love if you cannot forgive. The word “forgive” includes the idea of canceling a debt, or reconciliation, pardon, overlooking offenses, giving up resentment, forgetting any claim you have to punish, purging the past.

C. V. 44 is our text and in this one small verse we have a guide which reveals our spirituality or lack of it. It spells out THE MEASURE OF A MATURE SAINT...

I. THE NATURAL LAW: v.43,46-47

A. Love Friends – Hate Enemies: v.43

1. The command to love your neighbor was from God. Mt. 19:19
2. The concept of hating your enemies was from man. V.46-47

ILLUS: Perhaps because of God’s commands in the OLD TESTAMENT about exterminating the enemies of Israel, this concept developed. Or perhaps it came because of imprecatory Psalms where the psalmist prayed God’s judgment down upon God’s enemies. However the difference is that those acts were judicial judgments issuing from a righteous and holy God due to an affront to His glory, not in personal relationships between people.

3. The Lord reminds His disciples that there is no reward given for doing what comes naturally. V.46b

B. Love Friends Because They Love You: v.46,47

1. This is purely humanistic.
2. Even the hated tax collectors did this much.

ILLUS: The tax collectors were hated for several reasons: they represented a foreign power which had forced itself upon the Jews; certain Jews were acting in that foreign powers stead; they collected whatever they could extract, often cheating the people and pocketing the difference. But even these “low lifes” treated their friends with respect.

II. THE SUPERNATURAL RULE: v.44,45,48

ILLUS: In this passage there are 4 levels of spirituality or maturity. V.44 gives us a means whereby we can measure our maturity; it is in fact THE MEASURE OF A MATURE SAINT... The question is: How do YOU measure up?

A. Level 1: Love Your Enemies

1. An enemy is not just someone who is not friendly, but one who is hostile.