



FROM FIRED UP TO BURNED OUT

J.J. Turner, Ph.D. ©

On the journey of 45-years of ministry I have been on the peak and in the valley. I have soared with eagles and run with turkeys. I have been on fire and I have been a smoldering ember. I have written several books on attitude management and have been very negative at times. There have been times I have thrived and others where I merely survived. This roller coaster ride has been fostered because my birth certificate proves I am human; which sometimes I wish I wasn't.

I will go out on a limb and say that if they are honest, and why shouldn't they be, most ministers in full-time work have had some of the same rides. It is one of the hazards and promises of our calling.

Remember? Oh, those ideal days of early ministry. Most of us began full-time ministry with fire in our bones. We had studied a perfect Gospel; believed in the power of the Word; lived in a safe environment in school; and believed we could change the church and save the world. Remember those days? We were going to write the 29th chapter of Acts.

During the honeymoon period with the new congregation our fire was a burning inferno. We shared the Word with power, zeal and conviction; we expounded on the notes we had from our teachers. We reminded the brethren of the mission of the church and how we must return to pursuing it. We must go from status quo to a new glow. The last preacher wasn't able to raise the dead, but we felt sure we were the men of God who could. We were on fire, and that's all it took.

But as time moved on and the honeymoon ended one by one our ideas and dreams for a revival were shot down; walls of resistance were erected against our efforts and suggestions were rejected. The church that had hired us under the guise of "we want to grow" turned out to be only committed to the talk and not to the walk. The flame in our bones was being reduced to a pilot light.

Jeremiah was in a similar situation; called by God but rejected by the people. Thus, we can learn a valuable lesson from him about how to handle the challenges of burnout.



During his times of discouragement he thought about quitting and going into the motel business (Jeremiah 9:1-10). But upon further reflection he knew he couldn't quit. Why? God's word was in his bones as a burning fire (Jeremiah 20:9). What's inside makes the difference (Proverbs 23:7).

The key to staying fired up and avoiding burnout is attitude. Believing and remembering you are not alone in your ministry. God is your partner in ministry (1 Corinthians 3:9); Jesus is with us always (Matthew 28:18-20). Together the challenges of ministry are faced and dealt with. Remember God has called you to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-6), and to set things in order (Titus 1:5-7). These are not easy tasks. This is why we must not "grow weary in well doing" (Galatians 6:9).

The apostle Paul experienced trials and rejections that are hard for us to imagine as we sit in our air conditioned offices. Read Second Corinthians to see his response to trials. In Philippians 4:13 he affirmed "I can do all things through Christ." We can too!

Why should we think we will have it different from our ministry heritage? John the Baptist was beheaded. Jesus was crucified. James and Stephen were killed. Peter was in prison; so were Paul and Silas. Read Hebrews 11 again to see what happened to God's ministers.

Remember, if God calls you to the lion's den, He will go with you. If God sends you to Nineveh, He will bless your efforts. If God sends you to a valley of dry bones, He will resurrect them. If your mission is to a fiery furnace, He will deliver you. If you are banned to the isle of Patmos, He has a mission for you. God is not sponsoring a failure!

Remember, it's all about God and His mission for the church. You have been allowed by God to work with Him; this is not easy work. You and God constitute the majority. This means you must stay on fire. Bloom where you are planted, which means be faithful to your calling to preach the Word. God will do the rest (1 Corinthians 3:4-9).

The **Jeremiah Institute** is committed to developing and sharing materials for ministers and leaders to help them avoid burnout. Visit us often and check out our book section for helpful books in numerous areas of ministry.