**Are You Feeling Pressure?**

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 I have observed that when I talk with certain people about the Bible, one reaction to our discussion will be the following. They will say, “Don’t pressure me.” Perhaps you have heard those teaching the Bible say to those listening, “This is not to pressure you, but ...”. The point being that there are times when the Bible is read or taught that the folks listening feel pressure (guilt?), and do not like the feeling. Therefore, they want the person to quit talking! Let me begin by saying it is certainly not anyone’s intention to coerce a person into obeying the Lord. It does no spiritual good to force people into doing something that they do not wish to do. God does not coerce, or force people into obeying Him. He wants willing servants to obey Him. He does not want “forced labor” (Ex. 35:29; Isa. 1:18-19; II Cor. 8:12; I Tim. 6:17-18; I Pet. 5:2)!

 At the same time, pressure can be a good thing. We know physically that pressure is a warning sent by the nerves to the brain that some part of the body is in stress or trauma. This is something given to us by God to protect us from further harm. (Ex: The boy felt great pressure in his hand, so he pulled it from the vise. Or, the girl experienced great pressure after her arm was broken. Sometimes, those experiencing cardiac arrest feel pressure in the chest, etc.) In other words, pressure can be a good thing when applied correctly. One feeling pressure physically will take measures to prevent further harm to his body if this is possible.

 Spiritually, we feel pressure at times. If someone wishes to speak to you about the Bible, and you feel “pressure,” perhaps it is because you’re in the wrong! Instead of fighting against this, why not take steps to get yourself out of spiritual jeopardy (i.e., repent), and prevent further spiritual damage by returning to the Lord now while you can (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7-8).

 Sometimes pressure is felt spiritually when we know the truth but refuse to speak it. We often feel guilty afterward, saying, “I know what is right, but I said nothing.” The “antidote” for this is to speak the truth next time, and each time after that. Too, there may be some feeling pressure because they do not know the Bible as well as they should. The “antidote” for this is to spend time in God’s word and learn the truth so that we are no longer ignorant (Eph. 3:4, 5:17; II Tim. 2:15). In both cases, the “pressure” one feels can result in something positive if we listen and make changes. This would not have been possible had that person not experienced spiritual pressure in the first place!

 There is something to be said for pressure being applied in the right way. The apostle Paul did this with Philemon when he told him to accept Onesimus back (Phile. 8-22). Pressure was applied in the right way when Peter and the apostles told the Jews to “repent and be baptized … for the remission of sins” and then “with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:38, 40).

 How will we respond to God’s pressure? Will we reject it or will we accept and change as needed? This is a serious question, because the way we respond to spiritual pressure can determine where we spend eternity!

*-- You are invited to visit with the Caneyville church of Christ. Times of services: Sun.: 10:00 am, 10:45 am, 5:00 pm; Wed.: 7:00 pm. Website: http://caneyvillechurchofchrist.com Tune in to our radio program on 99.9 FM at 1:00 pm and 1570 AM at 8:30 am, Mon-Fri. Questions? Call: (270) 589-4167*