



October 3, 2010

Holding Your Feet To The Fire

Holding someone's feet to the fire is an expression that refers to making an individual meet their obligations or commitments. It is an analogy that aptly describes what we have to do sometimes as Christians in order to be faithful. In the examples of conversion that we read about in the book of Acts it is interesting that folks obeyed the Gospel after hearing the word for the first time. Some of these were converted from paganism and obviously there was much they had to learn about being a Christian. This fact helps us to understand why Paul and the other writers of the New Testament listed a variety of sins and reminded believers of what they needed to be doing. Paul told the Romans, ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*** (Rom 12.1-2). Paul reminded the Ephesians of their lives as Gentiles and the need to change when he stated, ***"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"*** (Eph 2.2). Later in the book he reminds them of the works of the flesh they should avoid (Eph 5.1-6) and adds, ***"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light..."*** (Eph 5.8). In our day and time we see the same thing. There are those who have obeyed the Gospel but never really seem to have put in the time and effort to grow. Over time they drift away from the church or become enticed by other doctrines that seem to be more appealing. Sometimes those who are stronger have to hold others feet to the fire so to speak so that they might realize the seriousness of their situation. God told Ezekiel to warn the children of Israel of the coming judgment against them and issued a warning even to the prophet. ***"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."*** (Ezek 3.18). God expects us to warn those who are in error so that they might turn from their ways and return to rightful service. This is not a pleasant thing to have to do but unfortunately is one that is necessary from time to time. As we warn or rebuke those who are straying we also realize that God is holding the feet of the faithful to fire as it were in that he expects us to do what is needful. We also have to demonstrate the correct attitude in doing this as we realize that none of us are without fault. Paul deals with this as well. ***"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."*** (Gal 6.1). In the religious world it is sometimes preferable to overlook faults and pretend that they are not there. We all have things that we have to deal with and our attitude is that we will manage and overcome them, but when something becomes such a problem that we may lose our soul it becomes an entirely different matter. Change is not easy and becoming what God would have us be is a process that begins at our initial conversion and continues for the rest of our lives. Christ told the church at Smyrna that Satan was going to cast some of them into prison but reminded them to be faithful unto death and they would receive the crown of life (Rev 2.10). The going may get tough but we need to remember what we are working toward. Paul states, ***"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory..."*** (2 Cor 4.17). The message of the scriptures is plain, the work is worth it no matter what we have to go through if we remain focused on God and his word we will overcome and have a better place to go.

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