

A TIME for THINGS POSITIVE and NEGATIVE

(Bruce Ligdon, VIA "The West Side Epistle", West Side c/C, Salem, VI)

In observing current attitudes that are prevalent in our society, we notice a clear emphasis on things that are sensational. In close connection with this attitude, it seems that the modern media has as its driving aim only to focus on things that are negative. Sometimes people will voice the opinion that we should only focus on things that are positive in nature and stay away from anything that might be considered negative. Is this really the proper response?

Everyone will agree that people need to be made to feel good about themselves and what is around them. People who are always being berated and made to feel unjustly guilty often suffer needlessly. In many ways, there is a great need both in our world and in the church for a sensible balance between things positive and negative.

The cause of our Lord is greatly harmed by those who desire that everything be positive. It is this kind of attitude that creates a false sense of security. It blinds one to reality. Anything that might be considered negative is "swept under the rug." Also, this kind of attitude presents a perverted view of the gospel and Christianity.

Imagine if the Apostle Paul had observed a "positive only" mandate. He would not have been able to tell the elders of the church at Ephesus; "I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). In declaring the whole counsel of God, it was imperative that Paul make mention of some negative things. In this conversation he warned these elders of how false teachers would arise up from among them, and they would be speaking perverse things, and disciples would be drawn away (Acts 20:29-30).

If Paul had just ignored this impending situation and had not warned these brethren, undoubtedly the church would have been more adversely affected. To be sure, there is also the danger of exclusively emphasizing things that are negative. This attitude also does a disservice to the cause of Christ. The person who is bent on being negative is always able to find something wrong with everything and everyone. Indeed, such a person always relishes the opportunity to find a fault or error in the life of someone else. The correct response at all times is for us to maintain the proper balance between things positive and negative. There are always problems when a person devotes himself to either extreme.

The Apostle Paul did not say that proper teaching involves only reproving. Nor did Paul say that proper teaching involves rebuking and exhorting. Rather, it involves a balance of all three (See II Timothy 4:2). Let us strive for a sensible and scriptural balance between things positive and negative. We must be able and willing to commend the good and to exhort and encourage generously. At the same time we must not refuse and neglect our responsibility toward those things that might be considered negative.

First and foremost, we must always remember that our primary obligation is to be faithful to our Lord and His divine truth.