

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

June 21, 2009

“I Don’t Like Negative Preaching!”

Every now and then you’ll hear a Christian make this statement. They’ve just heard a sermon or series of sermons that they would consider negative or hard. Because we generally prefer things that are soft on the ears and not hard on the toes, the occasional Christian will seek out the preacher afterward, march right up, and inform him that he would be much more effective in the pulpit if he would not be so negative. Sometimes he’ll go from there to explain to the preacher that negative preaching tends to drive people away instead of bringing them in. He’ll let the preacher know that negative preaching comes across as harsh and he is concerned that visitors will not understand and won’t come back. He’ll explain to the preacher that negative preaching does more damage to the person considering rendering their obedience to Christ than it does good. Indeed, it may cause them to abandon the idea altogether! However, if pushed, he’ll ultimately come out with his *real* reason for approaching the preacher. “*I don’t like negative preaching!*” Do you want to know something? Neither do I.

Of course, personal preference is forced to the back burner when it comes to pleasing God. I think of Paul’s words from Acts 20:26-27. **“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”** Unfortunately, from a personal preference standpoint, some of God’s counsel is negative in nature. For instance, the consequences for unrepented of sin is *not* a comforting and encouraging topic, nor should it be. Yet it is there on nearly every page of the Bible. Direct, plain application to the marriage and divorce portion of God’s counsel is not something most people consider enjoyable, particularly if they find that they are in a relationship they have no right to be in. When a Christian begins to live in an ungodly manner they are to be rebuked, which by nature is unpleasant and negative. The prayer is that it will lead to a very positive result, but the action itself is negative. Paul said that because he was willing to present the whole counsel of God, he was innocent of the blood of his hearers. Would that not also make the opposite true? If he had withheld certain portions of God’s counsel due to its negative nature, would he not have been found *guilty* before God of the blood of his hearers? If they should die the second death, if they should be lost forever, Paul would not be to blame. He had discharged his duty in faithfully warning them and teaching them.

Every preacher that I know has a verse or a passage that speaks directly to the one who would publicly proclaim the counsel of God that they have committed to their hearts and has become as a frontlet before their eyes. For many it is James 3:1. For others it is any number of the verses from 1 or 2 Timothy. For me it is Ezekiel 3:17-18. **“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them a warning from me. If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for**

his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.” My friends, I do not like to preach negative sermons any more than most like to hear them. Yet I have an obligation from Jehovah Himself to speak *everything* that is good and beneficial for my fellow Christians, and those who have yet to enter that saving relationship, to hear. That means that I have the obligation, as does any Christian who would publicly proclaim the gospel, to speak that counsel in its entirety, positive and negative. I can think of nothing worse than standing before my Lord and Savior with the blood of my fellow Christians on my hands because I did not have the courage or the conviction to preach *all* the counsel.

In this I request your prayers. So many times preachers speak about how the “current religious atmosphere” has affected Christians. We bemoan the fact that many Christians are becoming lax in their morality and stand for the truth. Yet we fool ourselves if we believe that preachers are not also being affected. While the New Testament says nothing of a clergy-laity distinction, many Christians come to conclusion that the preacher, as if he were a Christian cut from a finer material, cannot be swayed by current religious opinion or moved by the winds of change. Sadly, many preachers encourage this type of thinking and develop the sort of arrogance and superiority that would be right at home among popery with all its trappings. No, preachers can and have been affected and will continue to be. As society and the lax religious atmosphere continues to increase its influence over Christians, preachers or otherwise, the more difficult it becomes to preach the whole counsel of God. Please pray for me that I would have the faith, strength, and courage to speak all of God’s Word the way I ought to speak it. If you feel as though I am falling short, please let me know so that we can pray together, study together, and become stronger Christians together.

No, I don’t like negative preaching, either. However, I am more concerned with the safety of my own soul. That means that there must be a balance between negative and positive preaching. Also, after some thought and reflection, you may find that it was exactly what you needed to hear.

| In Need of Prayers | General Information |
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| <p>Remember Sister Kimberlin.</p> <p>Sharon Tirey continues her treatments. There will be some difficult days to be overcome. Let’s make sure to help however we can.</p> <p>Keep Will Markem in mind.</p> <p>Remember Kristy Kidd in her pregnancy.</p> <p>Remember Kristen Osterling’s unborn baby.</p> <p>Remember David Blakeman and his health concerns.</p> <p>Rachel Knollman had a melanoma removed. More tests will be run in July.</p> | <p>Remember that the prayer service will be held Friday, July 10 (2nd Friday of the month) at 7:30 p.m. There is a box in the back in which you may leave your prayer requests.</p> <p>The informational meeting will be next Sunday afternoon. Please make your plans to attend.</p> <p>The Bible study that will be held the 3-5 Friday’s of the month will begin this coming Friday (26th) at 7 p.m. at the Litmer’s house. Only pick up material if you plan to attend (red and green folders in back). If the material has run out, please let me know and we can print some more up. The topic is “Commonly Asked Questions.”</p> |

In Need of Prayers

General Information

