

# Preaching a Positive Gospel

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More and more over the past few years we have heard how desperately we need to hear “positive preaching.” I would guess that there are few preachers around who haven’t heard people say this in their presence or suggest it to them. I agree. We need to preach positively. We have something to offer to the world and we must unashamedly offer it. We must not hide or cloak the gospel message in anything that will detract from its beauty. If this is what those who beg for a positive gospel have in mind, then I will certainly voice a loud, “**Amen**”!

However, I have found that some folk who really press home the point about the need for “positive” preaching have something else besides the above in mind. When they are invited to elaborate it often comes out sounding like the following: “**Don’t** preach on specific sins,” “**Don’t** preach on the plan of salvation,” “**Don’t** preach about the church,” “**Don’t** preach that men must obey God,” “**Don’t** preach about religious error,” “**Don’t** preach on worldliness,” et al., all of which seems to be a rather **negative** approach to **positive** preaching!).

While I restate my agreement that Christ should be preached in a positive way, I would remind all of us that Paul stated that “preaching the word” includes reproving and rebuking, as well as exhorting (2 Tim. 4:2). One would be unbalanced in his preaching to do nothing besides reproving and rebuking, and the church that listened to such preaching for very long would be unbalanced. One is just as much out of balance, however, to preach **only** from a “positive” viewpoint, and the church that listens to such preaching for very long would be unbalanced.

If those who continue to cry for a “positive” approach mean that we should forcefully uphold what God’s Word says and the world needs (they correspond perfectly), then I couldn’t agree more. But if they mean, as some apparently do, that all they want to hear from pulpit and classroom is love, grace, faith, mercy, and “Jesus” (as they define such terms) apart from their accompanying themes of sin, obedience, works, the church of Christ, and judgment, then I couldn’t disagree more.

The religious seas are strewn with the rotting hulks of religious movements that tried to sail wholly under the banner of extreme negativism (oppose everything) or extreme positivism (oppose nothing). The only infallible and safe course is charted by God’s word which teaches a wholesome respect for both principles. May God help us to strike the balance between the two and to hold firmly to them both. With Paul, let us maintain the balance between both the “goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22).

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