

HEAT AND LIGHT

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The winter season gives us vivid reminders of the need for heat. Without it we would freeze. The approaching darkness each evening reminds us of the need for light. Without light, the ability to see would be useless and if prolonged, our eyes would eventually atrophy, rendering us blind. Normal human life requires both heat and light. What is true physically is no less true spiritually.

A few decades ago a cry began to go up from some within our ranks that we had been too “negative” and “dogmatic” we needed to project a more “positive” image. (A deacon once “subtly” remarked to me, a very young preacher at the time, “You can’t catch flies with vinegar,” to which I replied, “I was not trying to catch flies.”) This pressure steadily mounted at about the same time that books on “positive thinking” by Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie began to gain popularity in the general populace—and among brethren.

From what seemed a small beginning, a full-blown mentality of “spiritual positivism” among many brethren evolved. It has spawned instant “experts” in almost every area of “church work” who have hit the trail with sermons, lectures, seminars, and workshops. Many of these offerings have been powerfully motivating and have gotten some folks to working in the kingdom who had not been doing so before. I am thankful for that. Many in the church needed to be “warmed up” from their frozen state of mere bench warming.

However, we have seen others who have been highly motivated by such programs who have established arid begun striving for very unrealistic goals (e.g., instantly converting everybody they see, “cleaning up” the congregation instantly, demanding sinless perfection of the elders, producing immediate dramatic numerical growth in the congregation, et al). When they were unable to achieve such goals, some lost their faith, while others caused grievous problems in the congregation. Such misguided enthusiasm, unrestrained by adequate knowledge and comprehension of and appreciation for the Word of Truth, is but a reenactment of the Jews’ “ZEAL FOR GOD, BUT NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE” (**Romans 10:2**), which Paul lamented and decried.

We surely need to be enthusiastic in our religion, and we need preaching that moves us to act. As a people whom the Lord has purchased with His blood, we must ever be “ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS” (**Titus 2:14**). Likewise, we are to be “ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD” (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). However, the “pop psychology” positivism that has been so eagerly ingested by so many brethren does not quite measure up, either logically or Scripturally. It has evolved into the clamor for and preaching of a non-offensive, different “gospel,” which is not the Gospel at all (**Galatians 1:6-9**). I can hardly picture the Lord shouting, “Boy, do I feel great!” every morning before breakfast to get Himself going. Neither does it seem likely that Paul’s great enthusiasm for Christ was rooted in a constant babbling of “I am lovable and capable.”

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Maybe there was a time when we had more light than heat, but now it is apparent that many in the kingdom who may have been motivated to teach, know and/or care very little about their subject—the Book. This number includes preachers coming out of Universities and some preacher training schools operated by brethren. Surely, it is past time to supply more light to go with the heat.