

Messenger Of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16).

September 17, 2013

Issue No. 111 Mark Aites, Editor

Optimistic vs. Pessimistic

"Churches can become places of cynicism, resistance, and pessimism." – John Ortberg

"Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power." – William James

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." – Helen Keller

"My optimism wears heavy boots and is loud." – Henry Rollins

How we view things can make a profound difference in the outcome. It is amazing how many folks live their lives as pessimists and cynics. Webster defines *pessimistic* as, "Having or showing a lack of hope for the future: expecting bad things to happen." A *cynic* is, "a person who has negative opinions about other people and about the things people do; especially: a person who believes that people are selfish and are only interested in helping themselves." Wow, talk about a depressing way to view life!

Optimism is defined, "a feeling or belief that good things will happen in the future: a feeling or belief that what you hope for will happen." Mr. Ortberg was quite accurate when he said that "churches can become places of cynicism, resistance, and pessimism." This is the same malady that the children of Israel dealt with long ago.

When spies were sent into the land of Canaan (Num. 13), we recall in the story that only two of the twelve brought back a good or optimistic report. It was Caleb who said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30). The powerful voice of the pessimists said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we" (Num. 13:31).

This sounds all too familiar. We tell folks, "There are souls out there who are willing to obey the Gospel. They are looking, and as the Lord said, 'The fields are white unto harvest' (John 4:35)." But those pessimistic voices rise up and declare, "Folks are set in their ways. They are not interested in hearing the Gospel. It won't do any good to try to reach out to them."

In one community, where preaching students went for a campaign, a naysayer said, "I don't know why they brought you here to knock doors. Folks won't listen." After several days of canvassing the community, numerous Bible studies were in the works.

The negative comments in the church today are like throwing a pale of water on a fire. Churches struggle to make any headway because there is frankly too much noise coming from the pessimists. Mind you, they may be a small minority, but too often they are allowed to derail any efforts to do good for the Master.