

– Continued from page 1 –  
“negative.”

All the readily available, generally reputable translations set forth the second duty as “*rebuke*” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NAS, ESV, NIV). Although the word as it is used in some ancient Greek writings allows for other definitions, in the New Testament, its usage is always consistent with the following meaning: “to tax with fault, rate, chide, rebuke, reprove, censure severely” ([Thayer](#)). Again, with the fault finding. That is not an action one would put in the “positive” category.

The third duty is to “*exhort*” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NAS, ESV) or to “*encourage*” (NIV). Vine defines the original Greek word as “to urge one to pursue some course of conduct.” This would generally be regarded as a “positive” action, but it truly depends on the nature of the conduct being urged.

In total, the charge to preach the word involves two negative commands and one more-or-less positive command. Simply put, that is a 2:1 ratio for Scripturally balanced preaching.

This balance is fairly consistent. Even in the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah was given a 2:1 ratio of negative to positive preaching. God set him over nations and kingdoms “*To root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant*” (Jeremiah 1:10). Uprooting weeds before planting seeds is sensible. Razing derelict structures before raising beneficial structures is, likewise, sensible. Thus, reproving error in proportion to approving truth is a 2:1 proposition.

Consider Paul’s contrast of the “*works of the flesh*” against the “*fruit of the Spirit*.” The works that deprive a soul of the heavenly inheritance are enumerated as: “*adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries*” (Galatians 5:19-21). Seventeen sins are specified, although certain manuscripts omit the first item, so, in the interest of fairness, sixteen can be counted. Bear in mind, however, this is not an exhaustive list, for it is rounded off with “*and the like*,” meaning other behaviors of a similar nature will result in the same condemnation. In the other column, the behaviors against which “*there is no law*” include: “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (22-23). Nine items complete that list. This is a ratio of either 16:9 or 17:9 of negative to positive preaching, with the understanding that the negative side

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## GRATITUDE MAKES HAPPINESS

Jere E. Frost

Most of our unhappiness is produced by the gross sin of ingratitude – self pity is what it is often called. Anything we do not like, anything that is against our wishes, makes us miserable if we are consumed by selfishness. It is quite striking that many of those who were so miserable as to commit suicide were blessed with looks, talent, wealth and even fame. They quit on themselves and on life, not because no one needed them, but because they magnified their miseries and ignored their blessings.

The antidote to this kind of misery is to reverse the process. Forget yourself. Jesus said “*deny*” yourself (Matthew 16:24). Help someone who needs some help. Magnify your blessings and remember that all your problems – all of them – are temporary. We were made for eternity! What a blessing. Thank God for the great hope we have in Jesus, and for the blessings of the common day!

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was not capped with a finite number. Essentially, the 2:1 ratio remains intact.

If the foregoing examples seem selective, the reader may prefer the Ten Commandments, wherein the balance leans even more to the negative – 4:1, in fact. The decalogue includes a mere two positive commands: “*Remember the Sabbath day*” (Exodus 20:8-11) and “*Honor your father and your mother*” (12). The remainder consists of negatives: “*You shall have **no** other gods*” (3), “*You shall **not** make for yourself a carved image*” (4-6), “*You shall **not** take the name of Jehovah your God in vain*” (7), “*You shall **not** murder*” (13), “*You shall **not** commit adultery*” (14), “*You shall **not** steal*” (15), “*You shall **not** bear false witness*” (16), and “*You shall **not** covet*” (14).

None of this is presented with the intent that preachers or their hearers ought to be calculating in exactitude the amount of sin that is castigated from the pulpit nor the amount of righteousness that is championed. However, those who would complain about an imbalance really need to consider how the preaching they hear compares to the ratio observed in Scripture. In nearly all cases, the “negative” preaching being griped about is probably far more “positive” than would be suggested by a careful reading of God’s word.

## ***"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"***

***ACTS 16:30***

### **LEARN THE GOSPEL**

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

### **BELIEVE IN CHRIST**

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

### **CONFESS CHRIST**

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

### **REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 3:19; 17:30

### **BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

### **REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

## ***"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"***

***HEBREWS 10:24-25***

### **SUNDAY**

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

### **WEDNESDAY**

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard  
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.  
Members Expected.

## ***"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS... RESTORE SUCH A ONE"***

***GALATIANS 6:1***

### **CONFESS TRESPASSES**

James 5:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9

### **REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 8:22

### **PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS**

Acts 8:22

### **REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

## ***"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN"***

***PROVERBS 25:11***

"An occasional statistic or anecdote to support points made from Scripture can be helpful, but an occasional Scripture to support points made from stats and stories is a deeply flawed approach to presenting God's Word."

—Bryan Dockens

## ***GIVE ME THE BIBLE***

KDNF 840AM

Sunday @ 9:00 a.m.

# ***"WHOLE COUNSEL"***

***ACTS 20:27***

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## **THE BALANCE OF NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE PREACHING**

Bryan Matthew Dockens

It is not unusual for preachers to be criticized for allegedly being too negative without supposedly preaching enough of the good news in Scripture. While this is possible and all who preach should guard against overly negative tendencies, it is at least as important to know how to assess that balance. Whether or not the preaching is tilted should not be measured arbitrarily, but by a divine standard.

Paul charged young Timothy to *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:2). Preaching the word, according to the apostle, amounts to convincing, rebuking, and exhorting.

The word *"convince"* (NKJV) is translated differently in other versions. Indeed, only the New King James Version puts it like this. Most translations bring the Greek to English as *"reprove"* (KJV, ASV, NAS, ESV), while one has it as *"correct"* (NIV). The original term is defined by Thayer: "1. to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted; 2. to find fault with, correct; a. by word; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove; b. by deed; to chasten, punish." Carrying out this command requires fault finding, by its very definition. It involves shaming sinners. One might consider that  
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