

NEGATIVE THINKING

“We seemed like grasshoppers . . .” (Nu. 13:33)

You know the story. Twelve spies were sent out to spy out the Promised Land. Only two believed God. Their names were Caleb and Joshua. The others (whose names no one remembers) were negative thinkers. They did not believe God. They said that by comparison to the giants in the land “we seemed like grasshoppers”. They were wrong! They were not just wrong, they were sinful. Their negative thinking infected the nation and prevented them from inheriting the promise that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was precisely because of their negative thinking that they had to wander forty years in the wilderness (Nu. 14:26 - 35).

- Negative thinkers see the barren land - men of faith plant seeds in hope of harvest.
- Negative thinkers see the destruction of a swollen river - men of faith build turbines.
- Negative thinkers focus on failures - men of faith focus on promises.
- Negative thinkers do not believe God - men of faith do!

History honors men of faith but relegates negative thinkers to oblivion. There were a number of unsuccessful attempts to colonize the new world but hardly anyone knows anything about them. Instead, we remember our pilgrim forefathers who refused to be intimidated by the failures of others and optimistically believed that God would give them victory. They were right!

Edison failed thousands of times to find the correct material to perfect the incandescent light bulb. He viewed each failure, however, as a success. Each time something did not work he considered that he had just eliminated another incorrect piece of the puzzle. He was right.

For some reason, however, critics are popular for a time. Newspapers and others seek them out and they immediately bond with other negative thinkers. Consider the contrast between these critics, and the heroes they held in contempt. A Philadelphia newspaper said in 1876 that Alexander Graham Bell was a harmless madman with a useless toy. The Literary Digest predicted on Oct. 14, 1889 that the “horseless carriage” would never come into common use like the bicycle. The Scientific American predicted in 1891 that the Panama Canal would never be completed. The New York Times expressed the hope on Dec. 10th, 1903 that no further time and money would be wasted on trying to fly an airplane. A U.S. attorney, assuming that the radio was a fraud, prosecuted Lee DeForest in 1913 for selling stock in a Radio Telephone Co. The New York Times wrote on Jan. 13, 1920 that Prof. Goddard did not understand the relation of action to reaction. Adm. William Leahy promised President Truman in 1945 that the atomic bomb would never go off. Science Digest predicted in Aug. 1948 that it would be 200 years before men would land on the moon.

It is difficult for a serious student of Scripture to conceive of a “negative Christian”. Negative Christians are like dry rain, and warm snow. They just do not exist. Christians believe that everything is working together for God because they love God and are called according to His purpose..

Edgar A. Guest captured the Christian Spirit in poetic verse when he wrote:

Somebody said that it couldn't be done, But he with a chuckle replied.

That maybe it couldn't, but he'd not be the one to say so until he tried.

So he buckled right in, with a bit of a grin on his face - if he worried he hid it.

He started to sing, as he tackled the thing that “couldn't be done” and he did it.

Somebody Scoffed, “Oh, you'll never do that - at least no one has ever done it”.

But he took off his coat, and he took off his hat, and the first thing you know he'd begun it.

With a bit of a grin and a lift of his chin, and without any doubting our quit-it,

He started to sing as he tackled the thing that “couldn't be done” and he did it.

There are thousands who tell you it cannot be done, there are thousands who prophesy failure.

There are thousands who point out, one by one, the dangers that wait to assail you.

But just buckle in with a bit of a grin, take off your coat and go to it.

Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing, that cannot be done, and you'll do it.