

Positive Confession Theology – Some Reflections

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Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (CEV)

¹ When Christ Jesus comes as king, he will be the judge of everyone, whether they are living or dead. So with God and Christ as witnesses, I command you

² to preach God's message. Do it willingly, even if it isn't the popular thing to do. You must correct people and point out their sins. But also cheer them up, and when you instruct them, always be patient.

³ The time is coming when people won't listen to good teaching. Instead, they will look for teachers who will please them by telling them only what they are itching to hear.

⁴ They will turn from the truth and eagerly listen to senseless stories.”

Introduction

Positive confession theology appeals to many cultures because it speaks of positivity, upliftment, self-belief and encouragement as opposed to perceived doom and gloom language. Given a choice of messages, which will you want to hear? A message that tickles your ear or -an uncomfortable message that confronts you about something that needs to change in your life?

Positive confession theology gains traction because it offers a “solution” to many problems. Understandably, where positive confession is practised, the congregations can be quite large because the negatives, such as sin, sacrifices, repentance, the cost of discipleship, hell and judgment as well as benefits of facing them are sometimes avoided. Church services can, therefore, be reduced to listening to a motivational speaker. And this is popular with the people and financially rewarding for the church.

So, do we have a win-win situation ... or not?

Reflections Over Positive Confession Theology

The underlying idea of positive confession is very much mind-over-matter. Words have spiritual power, meaning, what you say out loud, is what God will enable. Speak the

“right” words in the “right” faith and riches, health and accomplishments are heading your way.

This is worrisome because the law of attraction—i.e. like attracts like—is a new age belief where positive thoughts bring about positive reactions, and vice versa.

Positive confession theology can create a measure of confusion concerning an orthodox understanding of God’s sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. We must realize that God’s purposes are not under human control and will be achieved regardless of someone’s positive or negative confessions. God is supreme over the universe, including blessings, salvation, and suffering and confessions are not going to enable or disable God. Even Jesus prayed to the Father in Matthew 6:10, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Followers of positive confessions often claim that a negative confession will result in hardships, poverty and illness because one is refusing the wealth, health etc. that God has planned for one. In this light, misfortune and illness is something that you can bring over yourself.

A negative confession cannot “cancel” God’s blessings. Scriptures such as Psalm 55:22, 1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 26:39 and James 4:1-3 describes cries of deliverance and help. God is a loving God and wants to be involved in our lives. But it is when we humble ourselves and cry out to Him that He releases us from circumstances or gives us the strength to endure them.

It is proper to confess who God is, what He has done and to petition Him with prayers, but know that His reply is not because of a positive or negative confession; His reply is always from His position as almighty God and always according to His purposes.

Positive confession sometimes teaches that the results of positive confession are proportional to one’s faith. From this vantage point of view, illness and poverty can be punishment/grounded in a lack of faith.

According to Ephesians 2:8-9, faith is a gift from God. Faith is not earned through deeds and words. To tell someone that they have insufficient faith also places God at the centre of their problem.

I have heard some leaders reason that positive confessions are merely restating God's promises as found in the Bible. This becomes challenging without proper context. Clarification is called for because simply restating God's promises as found in the Bible seldom creates context between God's universal and God's personal promises.

"Your best life now," "I am wealthy" "God wants the best for you" and "what I confess I possess" guides one to a belief that the Christian is entitled to good health, wealth and a general absence of hardships and trials which might not be so.

Positive confessions, although seemingly future-orientated, speak to the portion of life this side of the grave, which is far shorter than eternity on the new earth. It also refuses the reality that my plan for my life may not be the same as God's plan for my life. Someone, for example, must preach the Word in North Korea. Christians are being killed for their faith. A mind shift is needed from "me" to "Him." 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 is titled "Do all to the glory of God." All. The purpose of my life is wrapped up in the love and purposes of God.

What We Should Confess

Salvation and Repentance

It is written in Romans 10:9-10, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

In this light, confess faith, "God, I know that I am a sinner. I know that I deserve the consequences of my sin. However, I am trusting in Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I believe that His death and resurrection provided for my forgiveness. I trust in Jesus and Jesus alone as my personal Lord and Saviour. Thank you, Lord, for saving me and forgiving me! Amen!"

Repentance

But, should we confess our sins to each other? James 5:16 reads, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." Confession is saying the same thing about sin as God does and starts with us identifying sin for what it

truly is, honestly acknowledging the offences we have committed and a commitment to turn away from sin – all the while acknowledging that Jesus and He is the only one who can absolve us of our sins. We confess our sins to one another to ask for prayer, encouragement, and strength to deal with matters, and to reconcile with someone you have wronged. Ellsworth writes, “If we have sinned secretly, we should confess it to God. If we have sinned against someone else, we should confess it to God and to the person whom we have wronged.”

Faith

“I believe” and you can complete the sentence. You are encouraged to confess, in an attitude of prayer, worship, and praise the attributes of God as He is described in the Bible, what He has done in the past, is doing now and will still do. Confess your love, faith trust and so on. Thank Him, praise Him, and worship Him for who He is.

There are reliable confessions of faith, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith. These confessions clarify what is believed, why it is believed and are saturated with orthodox Christian teachings about faith, salvation, death, the Trinity and more. I emphasize the word “teachings.”

Conclusion

There is some truth to positive confessing in that when we function from negativity, we generally function from a position of thanklessness. Thanklessness is another conversation. However, when we live without expressing gratitude, hope -which is a positive belief that things will be better, starts to fade.

Positive confession does seem to have some psychological benefits in that optimism is good for one and confident people are generally more relaxed and creative. A spiritual benefit to positive confession is that positive people are more likely to see God’s hand in all situations.

We are not in a position to demand of God, and our words are not magic. Our blessings are not dependent on our faith and words but upon His purposes and power.

Therefore, focus always on God and be willing to put your faith into action (James 1:22). Amen