

My Thoughts on “I Decree and Declare”

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How often have you heard, “I declare and decree” or “I release the blessings” or “I open the Heavens” or “I bind Satan” or “I command the Angels” even “Holy Spirit, I give you permission.” This is a lot of assumed authority.

When someone prays “I decree” it certainly sounds like a powerful prayer. There is much reassuring comfort in hearing such a prayer. At face value.

But there is a lot of “I’s” in these statements! Let’s for now, look closer at the “I declare and decree,” keeping in mind that I am looking at matters through the lens of the conservative, evangelical and reformed theologian that I am. I also respect that other viewpoints differ from my own.

Scripture Readings (NIV)

Job 22:28, *“What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways.”*

John 14:13, *“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*

Matthew 21:22, *“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”*

Mark 11:23-24, *“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

Introduction

Each of these verses has at some point been used to justify some statement or belief of the Word of Faith movement. And here is the “thing,” all I have done so far is read to you Scripture, I have not placed it in any context, I have not done any hermeneutical or exegetical study and I have not compared translations or read the original language.

So, as matters stand, each can form his or her own conclusion to the meaning of each quoted verse. And I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that results will vary. Yet, with

each Scripture, the writer, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, had something specific to say. The problem arises when our derived meaning, differs from the author's meaning.

Body

So, I can understand how, with no other context, people can “decree and declare” and expect it is going to happen.

When we “decree and declare” we speak something into existence because we believe that we have the authority to do so.

The problems are numerous...

Let's work with Mark 11:24, *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”* Let's first focus on the word “ask:”

- In the King James, it is translated as “desire.”
- In the Afrikaans Old Translation, it is translated “*vra*.”
- In the Contemporary English Version, it is translated, “ask.”
- The root word is “*aiteō*” which means “ask, beg, crave, desire, require.”

And then on the word “believe”

- In the King James, it is translated as “believe.”
- In the Afrikaans Old Translation, it is translated “*glo*”
- In the Contemporary English Version, matters centre on, “faith”
- The root word is “*pisteuō*” which means: to have faith in, believe, commit to trust, put in trust with.

So far, I have not read “declare or decree.”

“Whatever” is a word that needs context, otherwise it may appear to be random. The will of God is certainly not random. In fact, in Matthew 6:7-8, when Jesus is teaching the Lord's prayer, He says, *“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*

Before we even get to the often-misunderstood verse 24 of Mark 11, we read in verse 22 Christ's Words, *“Have faith in God,”* which agrees with the Greek used in verse 24. Further

going back, we learn that Peter remembered chapter 11:14, when Jesus said to the fig tree, “*May no one ever eat fruit from you again.*” In chapter 11:27, the chief priests, teachers of the law and elders questioned Jesus’ authority. This entire passage plays out on the Mount of Olives, falls on the Tuesday of the Passion Week and occurs between Jesus clearing temple and His authority being questioned. The withered fig tree – a tree that was not bearing fruit – is a reminder of the judgment to come.

So how should we treat verse 24, “*Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours?*” The first thing to remember is that the key is “ask,” the second thing is the God-centredness of the passage and finally, faith is in God, not in one’s own words or decrees or declarations. This agrees with biblical teachings on prayer and with Christ’s own words of Mark 14:36, “*Abba, Father, he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’*” Let me highlight, “*Not What I will, but what you will.*” Now think again about “*whatever you ask for in prayer.*”

Jesus prayed with God’s interest in mind. Jesus prayed; He did not declare or decree. When we pray, we can ask anything and if God chooses to bless us, so be it. But when we pray, we must check our motive, interest and desires. Our purpose in life is to glorify God. Therefore, we should want God’s will above our will. Our prayers must focus on God’s interests above ours.

The kind of prayer that moves mountains is the prayer for the fruitfulness of God’s kingdom. Jesus was using an illustration. Faith in God + not doubting the will of God or God’s power + God’s will = results to the glory of God. Plain and simple. God is sovereign and is not dependent on man’s decree or declaration in any way.

Another problem faced is the words “I decree or declare” places the responsibility for it happening on the person making the decree. “I!” Too often in the decree and declare world they put the power in the words they decree. “I” means that that person, not God, must make it happen. In plain English, “*you decreed it, now you make it happen.*”

There should never be faith put in our words, but faith put in God who will answer prayer according to His sovereign will and purposes. The words we speak should be an expression of our faith in God to do what he has said he will do and nothing else.

If you must use powerful words, let them express faith in God to do what He has said in His Word.

Let's come back to the "I" in "I decree or declare." The challenge is that the decreeing and declaring centres around the "I" and not God. Some might argue that the "I" can potentially remove God's will from matters and even Jesus said, "*Not What I will, but what you will.*"

Some in the positive confession theology movement might say that we should pray "if it be God's will" because this statement is in itself a lack of faith. Yet Jesus prayed, "*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" in the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:10).

The problem arises when someone decrees and declares ... and nothing happens. There are a few reasons:

- One does not have enough faith, which cannot be since faith is a gift from God.
- One is declaring something contrary to the sovereign will of God. In this case, the prayer will certainly not be answered.

Another challenge arising is when someone prays something like, "I decree and declare that I or so and so will be healed from my/their sickness." If this is true and possible, then Covid, Aids, Cancer and so on should be an "easy fix."

If it was always God's will for people to be healed, then there would be no ill believers. Yet many of us are struggling with mental health issues, cancer, Covid and the list goes on. Think about these Scriptures as they relate to illness:

- 1 Timothy 5:23, "*Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*"
- 2 Timothy 4:20, "*Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.*"
- 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, "*Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*"

It is not always God's will to immediately heal someone. A person's decree is not going to change God's will for that person in a particular moment in time. Yes, God can and does still

heal today. That is why we pray for – not decree – healing. It's about the will and purposes of God, and God alone.

Conclusion

The challenge with “decree and declare” is that the words might be that of a declaration, but not that of a cause. No matter how positive one's words are; no matter how powerful the decree sounds, people simply do not have the authority to cause that decree to play out.

People cannot manipulate events to bring something to pass simply because they said, “I decree.” People cannot think of something then decree or declare, and that in itself will change their circumstances and bring about blessings, including prosperity and healing.

There is some evidence that the way one thinks and speaks, can influence one's attitude. Having said this, there are biblical grounds to think differently about things, Colossians 3:2 reads, “*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*” Romans 12:2 reads, “*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*” Once again, we arrive at the will of God, not ours.

In conclusion:

- God will never answer any prayer that falls outside His will and purposes.
- We are subject to God's decrees, not Him to ours.

If you want a prayer answered, pray in submission to His will. Align your heart, desires and will with God's heart, desires and will. There is then, no need to decree or declare, but to simply instead, ask. With this in mind, let's read again Mark 11:24, “*Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*”

Last words ... Philippians 4:6-7, “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*”

Amen.