

## POSITIVE CONFESSION OR 'BLAB AND GRAB' ?

*By John Gagliardi*

One of the few good things about being under pressure – whatever the source – is that it can force us back to the “basics” of our faith, and to reevaluate what constitutes the “rock” upon which we stand.

Having been a Christian for something over 25 years, I cut my “spiritual teeth” on the teachings of people like Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland, the so-called “positive confession” or “word of faith” movement, which more recently has included names such as Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Jerry Savelle, Frederick Price, Joel Osteen and Creflo Dollar.

Most students trace the movement to E.W Kenyon in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, although Kenneth Hagin is generally regarded as its “father”. The basic premise of the movement – very simply - is that God’s Word – the Bible – has real power and that this power is released and activated by our faith as we speak it out.

The logical progression of thought is that God “spoke” the world into existence by His “words”, that we are created in God’s image, and therefore we also can “create” by our faith-filled words. Our words – spoken in faith and according to His Word, are a creative force that affects every aspect of our lives and our future.

Derided by critics such as Dave Hunt (*The Seduction of Christianity*), Charles Farah (*From the Pinnacle of the Temple*) and Daniel Ray McConnell (*A Different Gospel*), the “positive confession” movement has been described as “aberrant” and “heretical”, as “cultish” and “being more about presumption than faith”. Hank Hanegraaf in *Christianity in Crisis*, accused “faith” teachers such as Hagin and Copeland of “demoting” God and Jesus, and “deifying” man and Satan. It has been called the “name it and claim it” and the “blab it and grab it” movement.

But I just can’t forget what Jesus Himself said in Mark 11: 22 – “... Whoever **SAYS** to this mountain, ‘be removed and be cast into the sea’, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he **SAYS** will be done, he will have whatever he **SAYS**.” It sounds awfully like Jesus is saying that if we say something, in faith, it will happen. That is why it is often called “mountain-moving faith” - faith that operates according to God’s sovereign will.

Paul says God “gives life to the dead, and calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (Romans 4: 17). In other words, he gives us an example of speaking something into existence that did not exist before. Paul goes on: “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the Word of Faith, which we preach” (Romans 10: 18).

If there is, as I believe, real and creative power in speaking out the Word of God in faith, then we need to be careful how we use that power – if it is positive, it can also be negative, as Proverbs 18: 21 points out very dramatically: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it, will eat its fruit”. Jesus warns us that we will be held responsible eternally for the words we speak: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12: 36 and 37).

The words we speak are clearly very important – Jesus obviously thinks so, and if he thinks so, it is good enough for me, even if the “naysayers” deny that our words have creative impact and that to believe so is “at best extremely aberrational and at worst heretical” (*Robert Bowman, Center for Biblical Apologetics*).

To get my faith back on track after reading some of the detractors' material I simply ask myself some really simple questions:

- Did God speak the world into existence? (God says so in Genesis 1)
- Am I made in the image of God? (God says so in Genesis 1: 26)
- Did Jesus actually say in His Word, "...He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father" (John 14: 12)?
- Did Jesus say, "By your WORDS you will be justified, and by your WORDS you will be condemned" (Matthew 12: 37)?
- Can I believe what God says to me in His Word?
- Did Jesus himself say: "Your Word is Truth" (John 17: 17)?

If Jesus, Himself the Word of God (John 1: 1), believes that the Word of God is truth, then who am I to question him? Who am I to doubt Him? If God's Word in my mouth does not have real power that I can stake my eternal destiny on, then what do I do with Scriptures like these:

- The mouth of the upright shall deliver them (Proverbs 12: 6)
- A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth (Proverbs 12: 14)
- The tongue of the wise is health (Proverbs 12: 16)
- A wholesome tongue is a tree of life (Proverbs 15: 4)
- A man has joy by the answer of his mouth (Proverbs 15: 23)
- Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18: 21)
- Let the weak say, "I am strong" (Joel 3: 10)
- He (Jesus) rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm (Mark 4: 39)
- The Words I speak to you are spirit and they are life (John 6: 63)
- The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that is the Word of Faith, which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10: 8-10)
- Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called, and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6: 12)
- Upholding all things by the word of His power ... consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus (Hebrews 1: 3 and 3: 1)
- Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10: 23)
- And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

As with all great truths, the truth of "positive confession" must be kept in balance. People who believe that just speaking out something, willy nilly, will somehow make it happen, indeed deserve the denunciation of those who sneeringly refer to "blab it and grab it".

God is sovereign, and His Holy Will must be sovereign in our lives – that "good and perfect and acceptable will of God" (Romans 12: 2). The "blab it and grab it" crew have little regard for God's will in their lives, seemingly never hearing the words of our Lord, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6: 10).

When they "name" something and then "claim" it, they ignore Jesus' own admonition: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us" (1 John 5: 14). We often hear it said, that He will give us the "desires of our heart" – but again, there is a key proviso: only if

we delight ourselves in Him (Psalm 37: 4). That means to make His will for our lives our “delight” – only if we can truly say, “Your will be done”.

He tells us to be still, and know that He is God (Psalm 46: 10). We can quit striving and stressing and worrying, and let God be God in all areas of our lives. When we bring our will into line with His perfect will and purpose, then – and only then - can you “declare” a thing, and it will be established for you (Job 22: 28).

Can we just “name it and claim it” like some “new age” mumbo-jumbo guru? No – but God’s Word, which is forever fixed in heaven and powerfully effective here on earth, tells us this:

***Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, and lay up His Words in your heart.***

***For then you will have your delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God. You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you and you will pay your vows. You will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you; so light will shine on your ways (Job 22: 21, 22, 26-28).***