

Keys to successful Living

Part three-dated 22/3/15

Reading : Hebrews 4: 14-16

The series on the Successful Living in 2015 and beyond has a special purpose and that is to equip ourselves with a Good Attitude and Outlook. The 12 keys that I talked about in my letter and previous sermons are to help us appropriate the fullness of God's Provision and His Blessings in the difficult days ahead. I suggest, that we make a point to memorize them and by the time we finish this series, we will have more than just a general impression—God willing, we will have permanent & positive steps to take with us in the future. So, here again are the first two keys/steps:

1. "Let us fear"(Hebrews 4:1) This is a surprising first step, but I believe, it is appropriate because of the spiritual condition of the Hebrew believers to whom it is addressed. In many cases, professing Christians today are in the same kind of Spiritual Condition and we desperately need to take the 1st step- fearing God at all times.
2. "Let us be diligent"(Hebrew 4:11) I believe that the right kind of fear(1st Step) will lead to this 2nd step. As I discussed last month, the opposite of diligence is laziness- a SIN which is tolerated in many Christian Circles/homes/families in various ways. It is equally deadly like other sins that the Bible talks about. The end of laziness is a big time disaster.

The third key is also found in the 4th Chapter of Hebrews and it reads "Let us hold fast our confession"(Hebrews 4:14). Actually the first four keys are all found in Hebrews 4.

We need to understand what is meant by the word confession. The word **Confession** is derived from a word in the original Greek of the New Testament that means "to say the same as". In the spiritual context, confession means that we say the same as God Says. We make the words of our mouths agree with God's word.

Of course, there is further implication in the word confession. It means that we "say it out loudly"- that we are not intimidated. The word confession has a considerable history in the foundations of the Christian Church. Many gave their lives for what they believed and confessed boldly & openly with courage (read through the book of Acts). The Bible encourages us in this regard.

The full verse for the 3rd key reads "Since than we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14). In the context of this third Let us statement, the writer of Hebrews points out particularly the confession that relates US to JESUS as our High Priest. Many Christians do not have a clear picture of Jesus as their High Priest, yet it is one of His most important ongoing ministries on our behalf.

Jesus is there as our representative in the presence of God the Father, standing as guarantor for us. Every time we make the right confession- we say the right, positive declaration with our mouths—Jesus has obligated Himself to ensure that our confession is made GOOD in our EXPERIENCE.

Notice what the writer of Hebrews says just a little earlier in chapter 3. “Therefore holy brethren, partakers of heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”(Hebrews 3:1 NASB). Those last five words tells us that our confession enlist Jesus as our High Priest. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. If we do not make a confession, we have no High Priest.--- Not that Jesus has ceased to be our High Priest BUT that we have NOT GIVEN HIM the opportunity to minister as our High Priest. Remember that Jesus is the High Priest of our confession- if we make the right proclamation in faith, with our mouths, according to Scripture, then Jesus has eternally obligated Himself to see that we will never be put to shame—that we will always come into the experience of what we confess. BUT, if we fail to make the right declaration, **then alas**, we silence the lips of our High Priest. We give Him nothing to say on our behalf in heaven.

In connection with this, Jesus in 1-John 2:1 is also called our Advocate. The word *advocate* is pretty similar to the modern word *attorney*. Jesus is the legal expert whi is there to plead our case in heaven. He has never lost a case. But if we do not make a confession, He has no case to plead- so the case goes against us by default.

“If you confess.....”

Can see how important confession is? It is vitally important that we give attention to this 3rd Let us key. The principle of right confession—saying the right words with our mouths—has a central place in the Gospel and in our experience of salvation. In fact, there is no Salvation without right confession.

Here is what Paul says in Romans 10 in which he explains as clearly as possible any where in the New Testament, what is required for salvation. He begins this way:

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Rom 10:8-9 NASB).

The message is that the basis for salvation is the word. It has to be appropriate by faith. There are two actions all Christians have to take: One with the heart, one with the mouth. First we have to believe with the heart BUT NEXT, we have to confess, say it out with the mouth. In the next verse Paul explains further: “for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation”(Rom 10:10). From this we see a vital principle: No confession, no salvation. It is good to believe in your heart but that is not sufficient. You and me not only have to believe in our hearts, we must also say it out boldly with our mouth.—making the word of our mouth agree with the Word of God.

Confession determines Destiny

Our initial confession relates us to Jesus as High Priest, but His ongoing ministry on our behalf as High Priest depends on our ongoing confession. You see, the whole Bible shows that our words determine our destiny. Let me give you some very penetrating Scripture on that point. Proverb 18:21 NASB says “ Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit”. We will have two(2) results in our lives: Either the tongue is going to **produce death** if we make a wrong confession OR it is going to **produce life**, if we make a right confession. Whatever we say with our tongue—we will eat the fruit of it. Look at the words of Jesus in Matt 12:36-37 NASB “ But, I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be

condemned". I have often heard Christians make silly statements they really do not mean--ones that are not honoring to God. Then they excuse themselves by saying "well, I didn't really mean it". BUT JESUS SAYS "Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an account for it in the day of judgment"--its not an excuse to say you did not mean it. We must hold fast our confession.

Two Alternatives

Ultimately, we only have two alternatives in our relationship **to Christ and to Scriptures:** to confess OR to deny. Again we have to refer to Jesus' words in Matthew 10:32-33 NASB "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven".

That is His response as our High Priest. There is no third alternative in spiritual matters. Remember ! Jesus also said "He who is not with Me is against Me" in Matt 12:30

It must either be a right confession to salvation OR a wrong confession which will not produce salvation. We need to keep affirming our faith verbally; use the positive to exclude the negative.....Let us hold fast our confession.