The Silence Of God

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday September 2nd, 2018

Text: I Pet. 4:11

### Intro

1. What do you do when God says nothing?
   1. *“Speak where the Bible speaks; remain silent where the Bible is silent.”*
2. The proper attitude towards the silence of God has been debated throughout the ages (I Pet. 4:11), and man has adopted two different views concerning God’s silence:
   1. Permissive: “If God doesn’t say I can’t, then I can.”
   2. Prohibitive: “If God doesn’t say I can, then I can’t.”
3. We need to make sure we are “accurately handling the word of truth” *(II Tim. 2:15)* and therefore must know whether God’s silence is permissive or prohibitive!

#### Understanding the Silence of God

* 1. We must respect what God has said in His word.
     1. Respect for God’s word has always been required of man!
  2. Jews under Law of Moses:
     1. Deut. 4:1-2: “Do not add or take away.”
  3. Christians under the gospel of Jesus Christ:
     1. Gal. 1:6-9; **II Jn. 9-11**; Rev. 22:18-19: God has said what He thinks of man tampering with His word: “Do not add or take away!” One can “go too far” outside the teaching of Christ and thus not have God!
  4. Respect for God’s word demands a certain attitude towards God’s silence.
     1. I Pet. 4:11: If we are to speak “as one who is speaking the utterances of God” we must speak where God speaks and remain silent where He is silent.
  5. The Bible does not always spell out the details concerning a matter.
     1. Sometimes God tells us WHAT to do but does not tell us HOW or WHEN or WHERE to do it.
     2. If something not specifically mentioned, it must fall within the scope of what is generically authorized to be done.
        1. “Go check the mail.” (Walk, run, ride, drive, etc…)
        2. Example: Abraham and Isaac – Gen. 22:2
           1. God didn’t mention wood, fire or knife…Abraham knew they were essential to obeying this command so used them. (22:6)
        3. Example: Church buildings – I Cor. 11:18, 20
           1. Not specifically mentioned, but they are generically authorized as an expedient way to “come together as a church” (11:18) “in one place” (11:20)
  6. The silence of God is prohibitive, not permissive!

#### How God’s People Have Reacted Toward the Silence of God

* 1. Old Testament
     1. Lev. 24:10-12: Reaction of Israelites when a son of an Israelite woman blasphemed God and cursed.
        1. Knew blaspheming and cursing God was sin but did not know punishment.
        2. Put the blasphemer in custody till they inquired of the Lord (Lev. 24:12).
        3. Did not presume to act upon God’s silence!
        4. God told them what to do about it: Stone him! *(Lev. 24:13-16)*
     2. Num. 15:32-34: Reaction of Israelites when found man gathering wood on Sabbath.
        1. Partial knowledge: knew violating Sabbath was sin but didn’t know punishment.
        2. Put the Sabbath-breaker in custody till they inquired of God (Num. 15:34).
        3. Did not presume to act upon God’s silence!
        4. God revealed what was to be done: Stone him! *(Num. 15:35-36).*
  2. New Testament
     1. Acts 15: Apostles’ reaction to Judaizers:
        1. Some taught the Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep Law of Moses to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5).
        2. Created controversy: Paul, Barnabas, and others were sent to Jerusalem from Antioch to inquire of the matter *(Acts 14:26-15:1-4).*
        3. The apostles, James, and elders of the church at Jerusalem gathered together (Acts 15:6, 13) and went to God’s word through the prophets and wrote a letter *(15:13-29)* saying not to act without authority (15:24).
        4. Since no instruction had been given, the teachers had no right to speak!
     2. I Cor. 4:6: Paul said he and Apollos set the example so “that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written” – Don’t exceed what God has said!
        1. Not even an apostle (Paul) could “exceed what is written!”
  3. These passages show us the silence of God is prohibitive, rather than permissive!

#### How God Has Reacted Toward Those Who Did Not Respect His Silence

* 1. Nadab and Abihu – *Lev. 10:1-3*
     1. God had instructed Israelites to get fire from the altar of burnt offering *(Lev. 16:12, 46).*
     2. He did not specifically condemn fire from other sources, but also did not command it.
     3. Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire” and were consumed by fire from the Lord *(Lev. 10:2).*
     4. God demands His silence be respected!
  2. Ark of the Covenant Moved to Jerusalem– *I Chr. 13:1-10*
     1. God’s Law specified the Levites (Kohathites) were to CARRY the Ark on their shoulders *(Lev. 4:15).*
     2. The Ark was to be carried and NOT be touched, not even by those carrying it!
     3. God did not specifically condemn the use of an ox cart, but He had not commanded it! *(I Chr. 15:13-15)*
     4. Uzzah was slain for his “irreverence” (didn’t matter his reasons) in touching the ark; the Levites were not carrying it on their shoulders – *II Sam. 6:7*
  3. Pharisees’ traditions – *Mk. 7:1-9*
     1. Pharisees bound several things as religious observances that God had not bound.
     2. Jesus said they were “experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9)
     3. GOD WAS SILENT concerning those things – Jesus rebuked them!
  4. There is no doubt that the silence of God is prohibitive rather than permissive!

## Conclusion

1. It should not surprise us to learn the silence of God is prohibitive and not permissive.
2. We all recognize silence is prohibitive in other areas of life.
3. We all demand that our silence be respected – no one has the right to presume on what we do not say!
   1. Example: “I didn’t order that!” (Do we ever hear back, “Well, you didn’t *not* order it!”?)
   2. Example: “Get groceries on list and bring back the change.” (Is mom happy when things *not* on list are bought and change is either non-existent, or diminished?)
4. Silence of God does not authorize, Scripture authorizes!
5. God is silent on many things, so must look at what He has commanded and do those things.
   1. We dare not presume on the silence of God!
6. He is loud and clear concerning what man must do to be saved – *Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16*
   1. Yet many in religious world are “experts at setting aside the commandment of God” for their traditions and creeds *(Mk. 7:9).*
7. Respect the silence of God, don’t exceed what is written, and obey what He has commanded!
8. If not a Christian, obey Him today! Repent and be baptized into Christ!
9. If a Christian in error, don’t wait till it’s eternally too late. Repent and be renewed!
10. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!