

The Old Paths

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“The Silence Of The Scriptures”

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Many people today think that God’s silence within the Scripture is in fact, permission to act. How many times have we heard people ask, “Where does God say not to do _____?” Others ask, “What’s wrong with _____?” This type of thinking often opens a door to sin and error that cannot be shut! In contrast, there are others today who say that if God is silent on a subject, this means we CANNOT do it! They do not ask, “What’s wrong,” but “What is right about _____?” Which is it? Which viewpoint is the Scriptural viewpoint? Are they both wrong? What saith the Scripture? Let us study the Scriptures and learn how different Bible characters acted when God was silent. Let us see what the truth is concerning the silence of the Scripture.

Moses

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, it was not long until they reached the Red Sea. Knowing that the Red Sea prohibited their going forward, and the Egyptians were quickly catching up, what were they to do? Let us read Exodus 14:10-14 and see what happened. “*And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves*

in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

Seeing that God had not spoken about what they were to do upon arriving at the Red Sea, Moses commanded the people to “*stand still.*” They were not to act until God spoke to them! We know that God parted the water, and they crossed on dry ground (v. 15-16), but until God spoke to Moses, they “stood still”!

Consider Numbers 9:2-11. After God had given the command to keep the Passover, two came and said they had missed it because they were defiled with a dead body. They asked what to do. What did Moses say? Did he assume they could keep the Passover anyway? Did he tell them to wait until next year? The answer: “*Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you*” (Num. 2:8). Once he inquired of the Lord, the matter was resolved. Let us learn and learn well that when God is silent, we stand still!

Balaam

Though Balaam would eventually sin by helping Balak to cause the Israelites to leave God (Num. 31:8, 16; Rev. 2:14); at the beginning, this prophet had the right attitude. When Balak offered great honor to Balaam if he would curse God’s people, Balaam said, “*If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more*” (Num. 22:18). Later, when Balak showed how angry he was and declared, “*lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour*”, Balaam said the same thing again (Num. 24:11-13). He could not go beyond what God had said. At this time, if God was silent, Balaam was silent, and he was blessed for it!

King Saul

King Saul forever teaches us that it is a sin to act when God is silent! In I Samuel 13:8-14, Saul decided to offer the sacrifice to God before going into battle because Samuel had not arrived to do it. When Samuel arrived and questioned him as to why he would offer the sacrifice when only Samuel was authorized to do it; Saul offered several excuses (the people were scattered, Samuel was late, the Philistines were closing in, he “forced” himself to do it, etc.), but it was not good enough! God said that Saul’s kingdom would end because of this sin (I Sam. 13:14). There is no excuse for acting when God is silent!

Doing What God Has Authorized Versus What He Hasn’t

Deuteronomy 28:1-14 makes an excellent case for doing exactly what God has authorized. This is because God promised blessings to those who

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were obedient to Him. The New Testament promises the same thing (Rev. 22:14; Matt. 7:21; etc.). Looking to Deuteronomy 28:15-68 we see curse after curse that would come upon the people if they acted when God was silent. Why is it wrong to act when God has been silent? This is because *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"* (Deut. 29:29). God has REVEALED all we need to live a pleasing, acceptable, and enjoyable life (II Pet. 1:3; II Tim. 3:16-17). Why would we want to act when God has been silent when the fact is that most people have not yet come to terms with what God has said!!

Reasoning From God's Silence

Seeing the overwhelming evidence that shows us that we cannot act when God is silent, God's silence helps us reason from the Scripture. For instance, we know that no angel is God's son (despite what Jehovah's Witnesses and others might say). How do we know this? Because the Hebrew writer makes the case that Jesus is much better than an angel and asks, *"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire"* (Heb. 1:5-7). The answer: *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom"* (Heb. 1:8). Also read Heb. 1:9-14).

In Hebrews 7:12-14 we learn that without a change of the law, Christ could not be a priest. Why? *"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."* Therefore, there has come a change of the law, and we today are under the New Testament, the New Covenant, and not the Old. There IS a difference!

When the Jews disputed over whether uncircumcised Gentiles could be saved, it was God's silence that settled matters (Acts 15:7-15, 24). There are other passages we could use as well. Let us learn and learn well that God's silence never permits, it only prohibits! Shame on anyone who says otherwise.

What To Call Sin?

Man calls it an accident;
God calls it an abomination.

Man calls it a blunder;
God calls it blindness.

Man calls it revelry;
God calls it rebellion.

Man calls it a chance;
God calls it a choice.

Man calls it an error;
God calls it enmity.

Man calls it a fascination;
God calls it fatality.

Man calls it an infirmity;
God calls it iniquity.

Man calls it a luxury;
God calls it leprosy.

Man calls it a liberty;
God calls it lawlessness.

Man calls it a trifle;
God calls it tragedy.

Man calls it a mistake;
God calls it madness.

Man calls it weakness;
God calls it willfulness.

Man calls it elegant;
God calls it evil.

Man calls it laughable;
God calls it loathsome.

Man calls it normal;
God calls it negligent.

Will you speak as God, or as man? (I Pet. 4:11)
What will you call sin?

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