

SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Heb.7:11-17

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Thomas Campbell, 1808, coined the expression: “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.”
 - a. This became the motto and the guiding principle of what is referred to as The Restoration Movement.
 - b. This was the movement with the cry, “Back to the Bible” – back beyond all human creeds -- all the way back to the Bible, the inspired Scriptures.
 - c. All the way back to the doctrine of Christ – back beyond all human opinion for what we believe and practice.
2. It’s still our plea and guiding principle today in the N.T. church.
3. With this in mind in this lesson we shall be discussing authority in religion, that of Jesus Christ, and of the Scriptures, with emphasis on “the silence of the scriptures.”
4. The importance of divine authority can’t be over emphasized!

II. DISCUSSION

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVINE AUTHORITY FOR ALL RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE IS EVIDENT FROM THE FOLLOWING FACTS.

1. God, the Father, is over all, Eph.4:6; 1Cor.11:3; 15:27.
2. God, the Father, gave all authority in heaven and earth to Jesus Christ, his Son, Mt.28:18; Eph.1:19-23; 1Pet.3:22; Ac.2:36; Cf. Deut.18:18,19; Jno.12:48-50.
3. Jesus promised his apostles the power of the Holy Spirit to teach them and guide them into all truth, Jno.14:26; 16:7,13-15; 17:8,14,18,20,21; 1Cor.2:9-13; Ac.4:20; Cf. Lk.24:44-49; Ac.1:1-10
4. What was promised them they received and by means of the power of the Holy Spirit preached and recorded the will of the Lord, Ac.2:1-4; Eph.3:1-5; Gal.1:11,12; 1Cor.14:37; 1Jno.1:1-5.
5. We are to speak as the oracles of God direct, adding nothing to, taking nothing from, nor substituting nothing in place of. A scriptural principle taught in both Testaments.
 - a. Deut.4:2.
 - b. 1Pet.4:11.

- c. 1Cor.4:5.
 - d. Rev.22:18,19.
 - e. 2Tim.3:16,17.
 - f. Col.3:17.
6. Authority to act from the scriptures is established:
- a. By direct command or statement of fact, Gen.1:1; Ac.2:38; Mk.16:15,16.
 - b. By approved apostolic example, Ac.20:7; 14:23; Tit.1:5.
 - c. By necessary implication, Mt.3:16.
7. Authority to act may be general or specific.
- a. If general, we must not bind a specific.
 - (1) God gave us the authority to assemble together (Heb.10:25, etc.); therefore, we have divine authority for a place to meet.
 - (2) But God did not bind the specifics concerning the place. Therefore, we may buy, rent or whatever.
 - b. If the authority to act is specific, we must bind that which is specified because the specific excludes all other things.
 - (1) God specified gopher wood for the building of the Ark, Gen.6:14. Therefore, all other kinds of wood were excluded.
 - (2) God did not have to say, and did not need to say, do not use some other kind of wood, use only gopher wood.
 - (3) That matter was immediately settled when he specified gopher wood. No other kind was allowed by the natural import of the language used.
 - c. God has specified singing (vocal music) as the kind of music for the Christian in worship in N.T. times, Eph.5:19; Col.3:16.
 - (1) Even though the Bible does not say not to use mechanical instrumental music in worship of God in N.T. times, no man has the God-given right to grant a liberty where God's authority excludes.
 - (2) The same principle applies with reference to the music in worship in N.T. times as in the Ark and the gopher wood in O.T. times.
 - d. In regard to institutionalism in doing the work of the local church, God has specified the who, and the Missionary society and/or other human institutions

- organized through which the work of the church is to be done is another who, not just a means of doing the work.
- e. In regard to the sponsoring church arrangement for congregational cooperation, it violates the specific function and oversight of the elders of the local church. Cf. Ac.14:21-23; Tit.1:5; Ac.20:28; 1Pet.5:1-4.
6. In the matter of authority there are two extremes which must be recognized and avoided.
- a. In order for a thing to be scriptural, it must be specifically authorized.
 - b. In order for a thing to be wrong or sinful, it must be specifically condemned.
 - c. Both of these are wrong. For one binds where God has not bound. The other looses where God has bound.

B. QUESTION: ON THE MATTER OF BINDING AND LOOSING IN THIS THE N.T. AGE, WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN THAT AUTHORITY?

1. All of the apostles of Christ, as the witnesses and ambassadors of Jesus Christ, but only the apostles of Christ, were given binding and loosing power.
 - a. Mt.16:19; 18:18; 2Cor.5:18-20.
 - b. They were given authority to bind only that which had been bound by God in heaven, and to loose only that which had been loosed in heaven by God himself.
 - c. That must be the case because Psa.119:89 declares, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."
2. Moreover, the apostles could only speak that which they had seen and heard while with the Lord, and then what was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit according to the Lord's parting promise to them as indicated earlier in this study. Recall Ac.4:20; 1Jno.1:1-5.

C. IN THE MATTER OF DIVINE AUTHORITY THERE IS NO BIBLICAL PROOF OF ANY KIND THAT THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES AUTHORIZES ANY ACT OF FAITH, DOCTRINE, OR RELIGIOUS PRACTICE OF ANY KIND.

1. Example: God, through Moses, said nothing (he was silent) about priests from the tribe of Judah, Heb.7:14.

- a. Under the Law of Moses God did not allow priests from the tribe of Judah even though he was silent on it.
 - b. Even Jesus, while on earth, could not be a priest because he was not of the priestly tribe under the Law, Heb.8:4.
 - c. Before Christ could be a priest the Law had to be changed, Heb.7:11-24; 4:14,15.
 - d. God's silence didn't permit Jesus while on earth to be something the Law didn't authorize!
2. Silence of the scriptures, or silence on a Bible subject, does not give anyone the right to assume; it didn't under the O.T.; it doesn't under the N.T. Cf. Duet.18:20; Psa.19:13; Num.15:30.
3. Illustrate:
- a. In the spiritual realm by Noah's Ark.
 - b. In the retail market by ordering one pair of shoes with specific instructions; or, leaving your auto at a full service station with instructions for an oil change.
 - (1) In this realm we recognize the importance of our silence – that we did not have to say do not do this and do not do that.
 - (2) If our silence means nothing, what might we get and have to pay for along with the shoes and/or the oil change?!

D. ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON THE FALLACY AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF REASONING FROM AND JUSTIFYING RELIGIOUS PRACTICES FROM THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1. To reason from or to justify a religious practice from the “area of silence” or the “silence of the scriptures” is to reason from or to justify a religious practice from human opinion, not faith.
- a. It is to “teach for doctrines the commandments of men,” which makes worship vain. Cf. Mt.15:9.
 - b. To do so is to make “opinion” equal to the word of God or a thus saith the Lord.
2. In doctrine and practice there must always be a clear distinction between *faith* and *opinion*.
- a. ***Faith*** is a firm conviction resting upon clear and satisfactory biblical testimony. See Rom.10:17; Heb.11:1
 - (1) Therefore, where God has not spoken (thus the silence of the scriptures), there can be no faith, and

Christians, when they are loyal to God, do as 2Cor.5:7 directs, “walk by faith, not by sight.”

- b. ***Opinion*** is an expression based on human judgment offered in the area of the “silence of the scriptures,” or without clear and satisfactory biblical testimony.
 - (1) The word “opinion” signifies “what one thinks,” and in matters of religious doctrine and practice it means what men think rather than what the Bible says, or in which the Bible is silent.
3. To justify religious doctrine and practice on the basis of the “silence of the scriptures” is to substitute opinion for faith and is to be guilty of rebelling against God.
 - a. It is to recognize or accept the judgments of men as our religious guide, and thus reject the counsel of Almighty God.
4. Such trite phrases as: “areas of silence,” “liberty of opinion,” and “the realm of expediency” have been coined by some professed Bible believers and put on a par with or as equal to the true teachings of the N.T. in their vain efforts to justify and to lead men to accept their fallacious ideas that the opinions of men may guide the people of God.
5. The following quote from W.R. Walker, in the Christian Standard, May, 27, 1939, where he expresses his conviction on authority from the “area of silence” is quiet revealing. He said:

“There are two areas in our religious living in which the authority of Christ must be recognized. The first embraces all his teaching and that of his inspired followers, the ‘vocal area;’ but there is another area, the ‘area of silence.’”

“I am persuaded that Christ has authority in the ‘area of silence.’ Christ, by his silence, in every situation concerning which he has left no direct teaching, has bestowed on me his authority to act for myself.”

(Here are the two standards or rules recognized by many in the denominational world. Namely, that of “walking by faith,” and that of “walking by opinion.”)

(W. R. Walker, in this quote, calls both standards or rules “the authority of Christ,” or that to act by either one or both is to act by “the authority of Christ.”)

6. Note what this concept of acting by the authority of “the silence of the scriptures” or by “the liberty of opinion” allows or permits men to do in religion:
 - a. It lets one put mechanical instruments in the worship of God by the authority of Christ in the “area of silence” or “walking by opinion”; and it lets another oppose, reject and condemn that practice by the authority of Christ in the “vocal area,” or “walking by faith.”
 - b. It lets one organize, introduce and work through Missionary Societies to do the work of local churches in the field of evangelism by the authority of Christ in the “area of silence,” or “walking by opinion;” it lets another oppose, reject and condemn Missionary Societies by the authority of Christ in the “vocal area,” or “walking by faith.”
 - c. That concept would permit men to justify on the one hand any doctrine or practice desired, and at the same time justify others rejecting and/or condemning any and all such doctrines and practices.
 - d. The doctrinal consequences of this concept opens the floodgate for every innovation known to men. God’s written word means nothing to those with this concept and there is no such thing as acting by faith.
 - e. Therefore, that practice would justify religious division among God’s people in contradiction to what:
 - (1) Jesus prayed for in Jno.17:20,21.
 - (2) His apostles guided by the Holy Spirit taught in 1Cor.1:10-13; Eph.4:4-6; 2Cor.13:11; Phil.3:16; Rom.15:5,6; 16:17,18; 1Tim.1:3; 1Pet.4:11; 1Cor.4:6.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Let us never lose sight of the need to learn and to respect the silence of the scriptures and to speak only where the Bible speaks.
2. May we always respect the authority of Jesus Christ expressed by his chosen apostles, his official ambassadors, as they were guided by the Holy Spirit in speaking and recording the word of reconciliation in the N.T. for us that we might understand and know their knowledge in the mystery of Christ.