

Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: 2Peter 1:3

- A. "Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent."
 - 1. Its original form: "Where scriptures are silent, we are silent."
 - 2. This quote was spoken in 1809 by Alexander Campbell, one of the leaders of the Restoration Movement.
 - 3. A great principle of the restoration movement is the silence of scripture.
 - 4. Martin Luther insisted he could do anything the scriptures did not forbid. Ulrich Zwingli said he could only do what the scriptures authorized. They parted company because they could not agree.
- B. Silence as a rule of language
 - 1. When one matter is specified in a given category, all other options in that category are excluded
 - 2. When God told Naaman to dip in the Jordan River, Naaman understood it excluded all other rivers; his anger proves he understood.
 - 3. When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, He didn't list all of the places he could not go; Jonah understood, and his rebellion proves it
 - 4. Bread and fruit of the vine specified excludes all other foods in the Lord's Supper.
 - 5. Immersion for baptism excludes sprinkling and pouring.
 - 6. The Lord specified vocal singing, excluding instruments.
 - 7. Prayer is specified in Jesus name, excluding prayer in another name
 - 8. Specificity helps the pharmacist get your correct prescription, helps the construction foreman build a safe house from the blue prints, helps the cook prepare delicious meals and desserts from reliable recipes
 - 9. Suppose I invited you to dinner at 6:00 PM this Tuesday and you came at 11:00 PM Wednesday?
- C. The scriptures limit us to what God has specifically stated
 - 1. Mark 16:15; 2Tim. 4:2, 2:2
- D. The scriptures permit us liberty only where God has not been specific
 - 1. Matt 28:19 - How we go is left up to us; what we teach is not
 - 2. Heb. 10:25 - When and where we assemble is left up to local churches to decide, but the decision to assemble together is not left up to us

I. GOD WANTS US TO RESPECT HIS AUTHORITY

- A. How God wants humankind to respond to His love, blessings, and commands
 - 1. Deut. 6:4-6 - shamar - "diligently, carefully, scrupulously, utmost care" (JPL); Deut. 2:4, 4:15, 17:10, 24:8, 6:17, 12:19, 12:23, 4:39-40
- B. Jesus obeyed the rule of silence
 - 1. John 4:34, 5:19, 30, 36, 6:38, 7:16, 8:26, 12:49, 14:10, 16:12-13
- C. God's Word mandates the rule of silence
 - 1. Deut. 4:2, 12:8, 32; Prov. 14:12, 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19
- D. The early Christians of the second century understood the rule of silence

1. Didache 4:18 - "Thou shalt not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but thou shalt keep what thou did receive. Adding nothing to it and taking nothing away." (aka The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)
2. Epistle of Barnabas 19:11 - "Thou shalt keep those things which thou hast received neither adding to them or taking away from them."
3. Tertullian - "Any doctrine not as old as the apostles is thereby condemned by the silence of Holy Scripture."

II. WHEN PEOPLE ACT WITHOUT GOD'S AUTHORITY

- A. Leviticus 8 & 9 records ten times that Aaron, Nadab and Abihu did just as the Lord commanded. Then the Sons of Aaron broke that pattern of obedience after the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.
 1. Lev. 1:7-8, 9:23-24, 10:1-3
- B. King Saul on his own initiative believed that because he was king he could offer a sacrifice at Gilgal - 1Sam. 10:8, 13:8-14
 1. He was told to wait; that excluded all other considerations or options
- C. King David presumed to adjust what God commanded regarding the transportation of the Ark of the Covenant - 1Chron. 13:9-10
 1. David became angry at the Lord's punishment of Uzzah, just as some become angry today at the instruction that God will not accept their good intentions apart from His specific commands. But what men see as harmless, is not necessarily so to God.
 2. After consulting the Law, David understood no one was to carry the Ark but the Levites - 1Chron. 15:2, 12-15

III. GOD HAS ALWAYS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS WORD IS BINDING

- A. In the Old Testament - Jer. 6:16, 23:16, 32-34
- B. New Testament - Col. 2:20-23; 1Cor. 4:6; Acts 15:1-2, 24; Heb. 1:5, 7:14
- C. Ex. 28:1 - It is about service to God by those He created; it is not about men serving themselves and expecting God to be pleased
 1. It is amazing how men presume the right to speak and act on their own initiative and therefore do what neither the Lord Jesus nor the Holy Spirit dared to do - 2John 9
 2. Respect for the silence of scripture move the restoration disciples to refuse instrumental music in worship and to refuse to create a national organization to manage the work of the church.
- D. God expects us to respect and obey His most recent command
 1. Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:8-12
- E. God wants us to accept what He has had written without twisting it into what we want it to mean - 2Peter 3:15-16