

What Does the Bible Teach About the Silence of Scripture

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: Deut. 18:21

- A. 2Tim. 3:15-17 - The scriptures are all sufficient.
- B. Col. 3:17 - We must do all things by the authority of Jesus.
- C. John 20:30-31 - The scriptures supply us with all we need for salvation.
- D. And yet there are many things concerning which the Scriptures are silent.
- E. What are we to do when we do not have explicit permission from God?

I. REASONS FOR GOD'S SILENCE

- A. God's silence is a vexing challenge for many people.
 - 1. They would like explicit answers where there are none.
 - 2. They often believe that the scriptures are deficient.
 - 3. A large number of disputes have started over the lack of explicit instructions in scripture.
- B. But there are reasons for silence, and by understanding why there is silence, we will understand better what we can and cannot do.
- C. Silence is occasionally an indicator of Divine indifference; it leads to liberty.
 - 1. In some instances specific or exclusive statements would provide unnecessary limits to our accomplishing God's purposes.
 - a. Matt. 28:19 - "Go" - What if He had said "walk"?
- D. Silence authorizes exclusion.
 - 1. Nevertheless, there are times when God commands us to do certain things in specific ways.
 - 2. When God specifies the voice as instrument - Eph. 5:19
 - a. The first day of the week for the Lord's Supper - Acts 20:7
 - b. Then we limit our practice to what is specified in the word of God.
 - 3. In such circumstances, other practices are excluded because God has been clear about what He wants done and the way He wants it done.
 - 4. In these instances, God has not really been silent; He has told us what He wants us to do, and since He expects us to be mature in the faith, He does not see the need to explicitly prohibit all other alternatives.
 - a. Heb. 5:12 - 6:1
 - b. Nor could He prohibit all alternatives, since people are very good at being "inventors of evil" - Rom. 1:30
 - 5. It is enough that God has told us what to do, and that it excludes any other alternatives we can imagine.
- E. When God is silent, it is always good to consider why He is silent.
 - 1. It is very easy for people to act where God is silent.
 - 2. Do we ever wonder why God has not addressed a particular matter?
 - 3. Is it perhaps because God has addressed the matter in a way different than what we were expecting or wanting?
 - 4. Is it because the matter we are considering is not in harmony with the infinite wisdom of God? (The lollypop logic of children)
 - 5. Is it because we like to innovate where God established a standard?
 - 6. Is it because we are trying to plumb the depths of the "secret things" of God which we really cannot understand? - Deut. 29:29; Isa. 55:8-9

7. We need to be honest with ourselves when we consider matters about which God has been silent, and not be guilty of assuming God would agree with our view.

II. INSTRUCTION IS BY COMMANDS, DIVINELY APPROVED EXAMPLES, AND DIVINE IMPLICATIONS

- A. Some have come to the conclusion that whatever is not specifically condemned is justified, and they will re-interpret scripture to justify what is clearly condemned.
 1. Instrumental music -- since it's not explicitly condemned, many believe God gives them liberty to use it.
 2. Homosexuality -- some have attempted to make distinctions between "promiscuous homosexuals" and "homosexuals in committed relationships," and seek out passages to condemn the former but not the latter.
- B. The Bible does not exhaustively list what we are to do and must not to do.
 1. The Bible does speak of rules - Gal. 5:19-23; 1John 2:3-5, 3:4
 2. We respect those rules, abhor the evil, cling to the good - Rom. 12:9
 3. God would have us learn not just by direct statement, but also by approved examples and Divine implications from which we draw necessary conclusions.
- C. We are not called to be Bible lawyers or judges of the law, but disciples of Christ; the Bible can be understood by honest folk of every walk of life.
 1. Matt. 11:25; Eph. 3:3-4; 1Cor. 1:10
 2. In Jesus, we have a living, breathing, and functioning Model for life, and we can and must follow Him.
- D. God's silence is not silent.
 1. While Scriptures are God's revealed words, Jesus is His Living Word.
 2. God has also revealed Himself in the Son - Heb. 1:1-3, John 14:9
 - a. It is not WWJD (What would Jesus do?), but instead, WDJD (What did Jesus do?).
 3. What we learn from the life and example of Jesus is authority for our application of general commands absent the specific applications. God has revealed Himself in the Son.
 - a. The "Golden Rule" of love - Luke 6:31
 - b. Love all men, including enemies - Matt. 5:44-48
 - c. How Jesus applied those commands becomes authority for our application of the same.

Conclusion:

- A. Yes, God has been silent about many matters.
 1. But that silence is not due to neglect or deficiency, there are reasons behind silence that we must respect.
 2. We need to avoid the temptation to impose our own desires and doctrines on God's silence.
 3. We need to trust that God has given us all we need.
 4. We need to look to the examples of Jesus and the righteous for guidance in keeping general commands.