



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

“His divine power has given to us all  
things that pertain to life and  
godliness...” (2Peter 1:3).



# “Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent”

- Its original form: “Where scriptures are silent, we are silent.”
- This quote was spoken in 1809 by Alexander Campbell, one of the leaders of the Restoration Movement.
- A great principle of the restoration movement is the silence of scripture.
- 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.

# Silence As A Rule Of Language

- When one matter is specified in a given category, all other options in that category are excluded.
- When God told Naaman to dip in the Jordan River, Naaman understood it excluded all other rivers; his anger proves he understood.
- 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.

# Silence As A Rule Of Language

- Bread and fruit of the vine specified excludes all other foods in the Lord's Supper.
- Immersion for baptism excludes sprinkling and pouring.
- The Lord specified vocal singing, excluding instruments.
- Prayer is specified in Jesus name, excluding prayer in another name.

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- The scriptures limit us to what God has specifically stated.
  - Mark 16:15 - “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the *gospel* to every creature.’”
  - 2Tim. 4:2 - “Preach the *word!*”
  - 2Tim. 2:2 - “And the *things that you have heard from me among many witnesses*, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

# “Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent”

- The scriptures permit us liberty only where God has not been specific.
- How we go is left up to us; what we teach is not.
  - Matt 28:19-20 - “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”
- 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.
  - Heb. 10:25 - “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another...”

# God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- How God wants humankind to respond to His love, blessings, and commands:
  - Deut. 6:4-6 - “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”
  - “Hear” is from “shamar” - “Diligently, carefully, scrupulously, with utmost care” (JPL).



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- Deut. 2:4 - “Command the people, saying ... watch yourselves carefully.”
- Deut. 4:15 - “Take careful heed to yourselves...”
- Deut. 17:10 - “You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you.”
- Deut. 24:8 - “Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do.”
- Deut. 6:17 - “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you.”



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- Deut. 12:19 - “Take heed to yourself...”
- Deut. 12:23 - “Only be sure...”
- Deut. 4:39-40 - “Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

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- Jesus obeyed the rule of silence.
  - John 4:34 - “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’”
  - John 5:19, 30, 36 - “Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner... 30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me... 36 But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.’”
  - John 6:38 - “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

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- John 7:16 - “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.’”
- John 8:26 - “I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.”
- John 12:49 - “For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.”
- John 14:10 - “...The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works”
- John 16:12-13 - “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

# God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- God's Word mandates the rule of silence.
  - Deut. 4:2 - "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
  - Deut. 12:8, 32 - "You shall not at all do as we are doing here today-every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes... 32 Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

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- Prov. 14:12 - “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”
- Prov. 30:5-6 - “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. 6 Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”
- Rev. 22:18-19 - “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”



# God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- The early Christians of the second century understood the rule of silence.
  - 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.” (from The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)
  - Epistle of Barnabas 19:11 - “Thou shalt keep those things which thou hast received neither adding to them or taking away from them.”
  - Tertullian - “Any doctrine not as old as the apostles is thereby condemned by the silence of Holy Scripture.”



# When People Act Without God's Authority

- 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.
  - Lev. 1:7-8 - “The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. 8 Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar.”

# When People Act Without God's Authority

- Lev. 9:23-24 - “And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, 24 and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.”
- Lev. 10:1-3 - “Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. 3 And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the LORD spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.”

# God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- God expects us to respect and obey His most recent command.
  - Ex. 17:6 - “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”
  - Num. 20:8-12 - “Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals. 9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock? 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. 12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

# God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- God wants us to accept what He has had written without twisting it into what we want it to mean.
  - 2Peter 3:15-16 - “And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”