

The Silence of God

Introduction

1. **What do you do when God says nothing? *“Speak where the Bible speaks, remain silent where the Bible is silent.”***
2. **Men have adopted two different attitudes toward the silence of God**
 - A. **Some argue that God’s silence is permissive. *“If God doesn’t say I can’t then I can.”***
 - B. **Others argue that God’s silence is prohibitive. *“If God doesn’t say I can, then I can’t.”***
3. **The proper attitude toward the silence of God has been debated by theologians at least since the time of the Reformation Movement.**
4. **We need to make sure that we are handling accurately the Word of God and therefore must know whether God’s silence is permissive or prohibitive.**

What the Bible Says about the Silence of God

1. **We MUST respect what God has said in His Word.**
2. **Respect for God’s Word has always been required of man.**
 - A. **Jews under the Law of Moses:**

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. **You shall not add to the word** which I command you, **nor take anything from it**, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

**B. Christians under the gospel of Jesus Christ:
Revelation 22:18-19**

2 John 9-11 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

3. Respect for God's Word demands a certain attitude toward God's silence.

A. If we resolve to do all things according to God's pattern, then it implies that we must reject anything that is not according to that pattern.

- 1) If a contractor cannot find something on the blueprint what does he do? "NOTHING."**
- 2) God only specified singing - we dare not play an instrument.**

4. **It is not SILENCE that sanctions — it is scripture that sanctions.**
 - A. **Paul told the Corinthians that the Holy Spirit searched out the deep things in the mind of God and revealed them to the apostles in words (1 Cor 2:6-13).**
 - 1) **This does not mean that the Holy Spirit has revealed everything in the mind of God to man.**

Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

- a) **Everything that God wants us to know He has told us**
- 2) **Just as we cannot know what is in another person's mind, we can't know what is in the mind of God unless He tells us.**
 - a) **ILLUSTRATION: "Chocolate Ice Cream"**
 - b) **We cannot know what God wants by what He has not said. We cannot know by our own intuition. We cannot assume that just because it pleases us - it pleases God!**

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

- B. **The apostle Paul says the scripture is able to equip a man unto every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).**
2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - 1) **This implies that if we cannot read about it in the Bible, it must not be a good work in the eyes of God.**

C. But the Bible does not always spell out all the details concerning a matter.

- 1) Sometimes God will tell us **WHAT** to do but not tell us **HOW** or **WHEN** or **WHERE** to do it.
- 2) I'm not saying that everything that we do religiously must be specifically mentioned in the Word of God, but if it is not specifically mentioned, it must fall within the scope of that which is generically authorized.

★ "Go check the mail" (walk, run, ride, etc.)

a) **EXAMPLE: Abraham and Isaac.**

Genesis 22:2

1. Did he mention wood, fire, knife? Abraham knew that these things were essential or expedient to obeying this command of God so he used them.

Genesis 22:6

b) **EXAMPLE: church buildings.**

1. Not specifically mentioned, but they are generically authorized as an expedient means to obeying the command to assemble.

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

5. **These passages should be enough to demonstrate that the silence of God is prohibitive rather than permissive, but to further verify this evidence let's look at.....**

How God's People Have Reacted Toward the Silence of God

1. In the Old Testament.

A. The reaction of the Israelites when the son of an Israelite woman blasphemed the name.

Leviticus 24:10-12

- 1) Put the blasphemer in custody until they could inquire of the Lord.
- 2) Did not presume to act upon God's silence.

B. The Israelites reaction when they found a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath.

Numbers 15:32-36

- 1) Partial knowledge: Knew that violating Sabbath was wrong but did not know the punishment.
- 2) How did they react to God's silence?
- 3) Put the Sabbath-violater in ward until they could inquire of the Lord.
- 4) Did not presume to act upon God's silence.

2. In the New Testament:

A. The Apostles reaction to the Judaizers.

Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, '**You must be circumcised and keep the law**'-- to whom we gave no such commandment--

- 1) **Some taught that Gentile converts to Christ had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:1).**
- 2) **Created controversy - Paul, Barnabas and others sent to Jerusalem to inquire concerning the matter.**
- 3) **Letter indicates the attitude of the apostles towards those who would presume to act without authority. (V24)**
- 4) **Since no instruction had been given, the teachers had no right to speak.**

3. **If these examples are not enough to demonstrate that the silence of God is prohibitive rather than permissive, then let us consider....**

How God Has Reacted Toward Those Who Did Not Listen to His Silence

1. Nadab and Abihu

Leviticus 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**. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

- A. **God had earlier instructed the Israelites to get fire from the altar of burnt offering (Lev 16:12; 16:46).**
- B. **He did not specifically condemn fire from another place but he also did not COMMAND it.**
 - 1) **We see here an example that God demands His silence be respected.**

2. The Ark of the Covenant

- A. **God's law specified that the Levites were to CARRY the Ark on their shoulders.**

Numbers 4:15 "And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

- B. **The Ark was to be carried and not to be touched.**

- C. **God did not specifically Condemn the use of an ox cart, but He had not COMMANDED it.**

- 1) **Uzzah was slain by the Lord not just because he had touched the ark, but because the Levites had not carried the ark upon their shoulders**

2 Samuel 6:3-7

3. Jesus' attitude toward the Pharisees' traditions (Mark 7:1-9).

Mark 7:7-9

- A. **Pharisees bound several things as religious observances that God had not bound. GOD WAS SILENT concerning those things. Jesus rebuked them!**

4. There should be no doubt in our minds that the silence of God is Prohibitive rather than Permissive.

Conclusion

1. We should not be surprised by the fact that God's silence is prohibitive and not permissive.
 - A. We recognize that silence is prohibitive in other areas of life as well.
 - B. We all demand that our silence be respected. No one has the right to presume on what we do not say.
 - 1) **ILLUSTRATION: "I didn't order that"**
 - 2) **ILLUSTRATION: "Go to the store and get some milk and bread."**
 - C. Remember, silence does not sanction (authorize), **scripture authorizes.**
2. Robert Turner in Plain Talk said: **"failure to respect God's silence may suggest that we have done what He has commanded only because we felt this was a good thing."**
3. The Bible is silent about:
 - A. The use of instrumental music in worship to God.
 - B. Church sponsored recreation and entertainment.
 - C. Infant Baptism.
 - D. The sponsoring church arrangement.
 - E. Church sponsored benevolence to non-Christians.
 - F. Church sponsored institutions to evangelize the world and edify the saints.
 - G. National and state conventions.
 - H. On and On and On and On and On!
 - 1) We dare not presume to act upon the silence of God.
5. However, God does speak loud and clear concerning what we must do in order to be saved **(Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)**

