

When God Says Nothing

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For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (Hebrews 7:14).

There is an age old principle which is understood by everyone regarding the subject of authority. This principle states that silence is restrictive.

For example, consider a teacher who gives permission to a student to use the restroom during class. Instead of going to the restroom, the student leaves school and goes to Whataburger. When the student is caught, and students who cut class always get caught, the student protests his leaving school by telling the teacher, *“But you didn’t say not to go to Whataburger!”* How would the teacher respond to such an argument?

Did the teacher need to tell the student all the places he was prohibited from going before he left the classroom? Of course not. By the teacher giving the student permission to use the restroom, the teacher’s silence on all other places the student could not go was restrictive.

The above cited passage in Hebrews uses this very principle. The writer of Hebrews is making an argument as to the superior priesthood of Jesus relative to Melchisedec. Through Moses, God established a priesthood in Israel among the tribe of Levi. God only specified priests to come from Levi. God did not specifically exclude all the other eleven tribes. Instead, God said nothing.

Therefore, everyone knew priests could not come from the tribe of Judah because God said nothing about priests coming from the tribe of Judah. Yes, Israel recognized God’s silence as being restrictive.

Examples of God’s Silence Being Restrictive

The principle of God’s silence being restrictive was well documented in the Bible. For example, consider the deaths of two infamous priests: *“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD”* (Lev. 10:1-2).

The Lord had said nothing about all the different places the priests were *not* to get fire. Instead, priests understood that God’s silence prohibited them from getting fire from all other places. God only specified one place to get fire: the altar (Lev. 16:12).

Also, consider the death of Uzzah: *“And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah*

put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2 Sam. 6:6-7).

God specified how the Ark was to be transported. God said nothing about transporting the Ark on a cart. He was silent about transporting the Ark on a cart. Clearly, these two examples demonstrate God’s silence as being restrictive.

Applying the Restrictive Principle of Silence

Well, what does God’s silence mean to us, today? People have presumed many beliefs and practices about which God has said nothing. People have both added and subtracted from what God has said regarding many subjects. For example, the resurrected Lord said baptism was necessary for salvation: *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). Therefore, Peter preached baptism was for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Yet, many teach baptism is not essential to salvation. Many claim we can say “the sinner’s prayer” to be saved. Where can we read about the “sinners prayer?” No where. God did not speak a word about praying any kind of a prayer in order to receive salvation. Relying on what God did not say at the expense of what He did say will cost us our salvation.

Also, many churches today have used God’s silence as the basis for all kinds of worship practices for which He has said nothing. Many have turned worship into entertainment. Bands, choirs, and worship teams are used to entertain audiences. God has said all are to participate in worship by worshipping in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Worship is not part of the performing arts.

Also, God has said the music of worshippers is to be singing; the instrument being the heart (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). What will become of those who have presumed God will accept entertainment in the place of worship? The examples of Nadab, Abihu, and Uzzah, clearly teach us that God will not accept our presumption in the place of what He has commanded.

Lastly, churches have changed God’s will concerning the work of local churches. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul explained how the church was specifically arranged in order to strengthen each other’s faith, provide for each needs of saints, and build the body of Christ: *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph. 4:11-12).

The New Testament explains how churches are work in the areas of edification, benevolence, and evangelism. Yet, churches are commonly involved in activities about which God has said nothing. For example, God has not spoken a word about churches being addiction recovery centers, homeless shelters, and political action groups. Other churches have become nothing more than rec-centers.

By changing the purpose of the local church, people have created a church which reflects themselves rather than reflecting the One who died to purchase them (Acts 20:28).

Conclusion

Those who consider God's silence as permissive are presumptuous. David had been guilty of presuming to know God's unexpressed desires when he decided to build a Temple. God rebuked David by asking, "*In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"*" (2 Sam. 7:7). David would later write, "*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression*" (Psa. 19:13).

Attempting to serve God based on our presumption is sinful. Those who use God's silence as liberty and license are doomed to fail. David was genuine and sincere in wanting to build a temple to God; however, God did not command him to do this. Therefore, sincerity alone is not enough to determine how to acceptably serve God. Jesus would later teach that true worshippers worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Rather than forming beliefs and practices based on what God has not said, let us believe and practice what God has said: "*...that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written...*" (1 Cor. 4:6). Let us believe, teach, and do only what God has spoken: "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...*" (1 Pet. 4:11). When God says nothing on a matter, we must not presumptuously act as if we have the right to introduce a concept or practice unrevealed by the Holy Spirit.

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