

Seeking The Old Paths #3
Or
The Silence Of The Scriptures

Introduction.

- A. Without Bible authority, the identity of God's people on earth is lost. And if our identity is lost, our hope for a home in heaven is in vain.
- B. It used to be that preachers were constantly referring to God's word in their lessons. In questioning some practice, brethren would ask for "Book, Chapter and Verse."
- C. That was before the term "dialogue" became so popular. Error was often exposed or challenged openly. Such was what Isaiah did in Isa. 8:20, when he said, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."

I. *Where Does The Bible Say Not To?*

- A. The most common question asked whenever God has not spoken or authorized a particular thing is the "Why can't we?" question.
 - 1. The basic error is presumptiveness and disrespect for truth.
 - 2. The nature of this desire is that if we can do the thing not mentioned in the Bible, then we can do not only the few things God has mentioned, but also the thousands of things He has not mentioned.
- B. But we need to ask ourselves what is God's answer to the meaning of His silence. Therefore, let us go to the Bible and ask Him.

II. *Old Testament Examples*

- A. Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:10-14)
 - 1. The question at this time was, "Why can't we go back to Egypt?"
 - 2. But Moses told the people to "Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever."
 - 3. But they had to wait until God was ready.
 - 4. Finally, the Lord said to move.
- B. Israel at the first post-exodus Passover (Num. 9:1-4).
 - 1. The first Passover was observed in much haste. This is the first leisurely observance of the Passover.
 - 2. God had already given instruction about the person who was unclean because of contact with a dead body (Num. 5:1-4).
 - 3. Yet the people said, "Why can't we offer at the appointed time? Does this mean we can't observe the Passover?"
 - 4. Moses told them to "wait" for God's answer.
 - 5. Therefore, the question might rightly be asked, "How long do we wait?"
 - a. Until God gives the answer, even if it means waiting until the Day of Judgment before He answers.
 - b. The wait also implies don't presume on the answer.
 - c. It means, "No you may not do it!"
 - 1) Children often ask parents if they may do this or that. The parent says, "We'll see."
 - 2) The child understands they are not allowed to do the thing until the parent gives the go ahead.
 - 6. In this case the answer comes in verses 10-12.
- C. Israel at the plains of Moab before entering Canaan (Deut. 28-30).
 - 1. The children of Israel knew the revealed word of God (Deut. 29:29), and they knew they would be blessed if they were obedient to His word (Deut 28:1-2).

2. The Lord had told Israel, "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it" (Deut. 12:32). Also see Deut. 4:2.
3. Yet once again they ask, "Why can't we go back?"

III. *New Testament Examples.*

- A. The restoration movement was noted for its slogan, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."
 1. Thomas Campbell first said this in 1808.
 2. But in 1659, Edward Stillingfleet, had made the statement, "For the church to require more than Christ Himself did, or make conditions of communion more than our Savior did for discipleship, is wholly unwarranted."
 3. Andrew Monro, a Scottish book salesman at that meeting in 1808 understood and said, "Mr. Campbell, if we adopt that as a basis, then there is an end to infant baptism."
 4. Silence does not authorize any action. Only God's revealed word does that.
- B. That, dear friend, is the whole point of Heb 7:14 ("For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.")
 1. He didn't need to specifically forbid Judah from the priesthood, because Levi had already been appointed.
 2. Korah and his friend learned this lesson the hard way in Numbers 16.
- C. The fact there is no instruction does not give us the right to speak (Acts 15:24).
 1. Some from Jerusalem were teaching parts of the Old Law had to be kept for Gentile Christians to be satisfactory in God's sight.
 2. The church at Antioch sent brethren to Jerusalem to inquire concerning this matter.
 3. The reply went back, "Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction
 - a. Notice the phrase, "to whom we gave no instruction."
 - b. The Greek word "diastello" is translated commandment in the NKJV.
 - c. The NIV translates the passage, "We have heard that some went out from among us without our authorization."
 4. Since no instruction had been given, the teachers had no right to speak. Silence does not authorize; it prohibits!

Conclusion:

- A. If we have no direct statement (command), or approved apostolic example, or a necessarily implied conclusion, we have no business doing something.
- B. If you have been practicing things or advocating things just because the Bible "doesn't say we can't," you need to turn from those sinful practices and come to God in obedience to His "revealed" word.