The Thunderous Silence of God

There used to be a much-used saying among Christians in the church - "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent." Unfortunately, the saying is not heard near as often today as it was in the past. You may have noted that on our website, we have the saying listed on the homepage. The saying in and of itself is factual (at least regarding the church here in Cleveland), and it is scriptural in nature. Consider the words of Peter, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11). Perhaps the saying was coined based on what Peter states.

Currently, the authority of God is mocked and rejected by many in the religious world. Imperative is the fact that when God speaks, for our spiritual sake and well-being, we must listen and then obey (Hebrews 1:1-2, James 4:17). Many in the religious world, and some in the church, take away God's right to instruct how we should live and how we should worship. The failure to respect the authority of God will bring eternal condemnation on the disobedient (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Joe Neil Clayton in his book, *The Thundering Silence of God*, examines how our respect for the authority of God is seen in how we view and apply the silence of God's Word, the Scriptures. Inherently, we must respect what the Bible does not say equally with what it does say. After all, God does not provide a single list of everything that He forbids. One of the easiest and earliest examples of this principle is found in Genesis chapters 6-8, the story of the flood. God instructs Noah to build the Ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6:13). Please note that God did not tell Noah what kinds of wood not to use. God's thunderous silence is clearly

exhibited in this story. By telling Noah what to use, God was also telling him what not to use.

Consider now the Hebrew writer as he explains the priesthood of Jesus. "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood" (Hebrews 7:12-14). The Hebrew writer argues using the silence of what was not spoken in Scripture. God had appointed the Levite men as priests (Exodus 32:29, Numbers 1:49-51). The thunderous silence of God speaks. Even the Hebrew writer, who was not alive during the time of Moses, understood what God meant by what He did not say. God only spoke of the Levites serving as priests. Thus, all other tribes were excluded from serving. By saying that only Levites could serve as priest under the Old Law, God was saying no other tribe could serve, which is exactly what the Hebrew writer records.

Finally, the use of musical instruments in the worship assembly. There is no verse of Scripture in the New Testament that forbids the use of musical instruments in the worship service. However, there are verses that do instruct as to what kind of music God wants to be worshiped with. Paul states, "Speaking to one another... singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19), and "Teaching and admonishing one another... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). God, inspiring Paul, tells us to use singing as our music. By instructing us to sing, God is also instructing us in what not to do - employ the use of musical instruments.

The thunderous silence of God is amazing when listened to. Just as we must respect and submit to what He says, we dare not take the opportunity to question what He does not say.

Clayton, J. (2009). The Thunderous Silence of God. Cogdill Foundation Publications. http://evangelistonline.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Thunder.pdf