

GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?
 HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

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The Silence of God

THE FIFTIETH PSALM opens with, “The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken.”

The Lord has spoken *in creation*. God said, “Let there be,” and there came into existence that which he commanded. God spoke to the fathers *through the prophets* “by divers portions and in divers manners” (Hebrews 1:1). In those days God spoke to some directly (Genesis 3:9; 12:1), to some by visions (Genesis 15:1), to some through angels (Genesis 18), to Moses out of the burning bush (Ex. 3). But today God speaks through his Son (Hebrews 1:2). When Jesus was transfigured, God said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). Moses prophesied, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15). Peter quoted this prophecy, and applied it to Christ, saying, “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:23).

Living under the last will and

testament of Christ, we must hearken unto whatever he requires of us. When he tells us to believe on him, we must—with all the evidence that God has given to prove that Jesus is his Son—believe. “For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). When he tells us to repent, we must repent. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). When he tells us to be baptized, we must be baptized. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). There could be no justification for holding to faith as being essential, while repudiating baptism as being non-essential; for Christ, with all power in heaven and on earth, made both faith and baptism prerequisites of salvation. When he tells us “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded,” we must be faithful to obey every command (Matthew 28:20).

AND I KEPT SILENCE”

The fiftieth psalm opens with “the

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THE SILENCE OF GOD

Lord hath spoken,” but in the twenty-first verse of the same psalm the Lord said, “I kept silence.” There were times when God spoke and times when God remained silent. In the days of young Samuel the word of God was “precious” for “there was no open vision” (1 Samuel 3:1).

Since the writing of the book of Revelation, there has been no “open vision,” no additional word from God. Since we are in the greatest period of God’s silence, we need to give it careful consideration, and be sure that we have a proper attitude toward both His word and His silence.

The silence of God today shows (1) *the authority of his word*. Since God has not spoken to man since the first century, and since he has given no further revelation, it is evident that he intends for the word which he has given to be authoritative. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Jesus said, “For I have not spo-

ken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). What Christ spoke was the truth, because God’s word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus could say, “All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

The silence of God today shows (2) *the perfection and completion of his word*. He made no arrangements for amendments. He gave it as the “perfect law” (James 1:25). God’s people are “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). He has warned against any changes or alterations in any way, either to add to or to subtract from (Galatians 1:8,9; Revelation 22:18,19).

The silence of God today shows (3) *the power of his word*. In the gospel of Christ he has provided the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). It was powerful enough to save people who were guilty of crucifying Christ (Acts 2). It was powerful enough to save Saul of Tarsus from the sin of blasphemy (1 Timothy 1:13). In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul listed a long list of sinners, and said, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). These people were saved by the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:2).

WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD’S SILENCE

Since God has not spoken to man directly in a long time, man may think that he can do as he pleas-

es. Peter described some with the scoffing attitude: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3: 3,4). In the psalm God warned, “These things thou hast done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.” (Psalm 50:21.)

Man may show an improper attitude toward God’s silence by presuming to speak where God has kept silence, by going beyond that which is written. The sprinkling of infants is a presumption upon the silence of God. There is no scripture, either by direct statement, approved example, or necessary inference, that teaches or permits it. The use of instrumental music in the worship is a presumption upon the silence of God. There is no scripture that teaches or allows its use. On the other hand the command is given, “Speaking to yourselves (one to another ASV) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19). Human societies and human institutions supported by the church are presumptions upon the silence of God. In all that God has revealed about the New Testament church such arrangements cannot be found in his perfect revelation. An eldership overseeing the work of more than the local congregation is a presumption upon the silence

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of God. Elders were specifically told, “Feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 Peter 5:2).

The will of God is revealed *in his word*, but the will of God is also revealed *in his silence*. David said, “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1). This passage is quoted in Matthew 22: 44 and applied to Christ. This passage is also quoted in Hebrews 1:13 in the following way, “But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?”

Nowhere in all the word of God can it be found that he said this to an angel. The *silence* of God forbade an angel being the fulfilment of this scripture. As the word of God is authoritative and demands respect, so must the silence of God. “Learn not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Corinthians 4:6 ASV).

RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD’S SILENCE

The right attitude toward God’s silence may be expressed in some of the slogans of old. “Where the scriptures speak, let us speak; where the scriptures are silent, let us be silent.” “Where God’s word goes, we go; where God’s word

stops, we stop.” “An activity is right only when God approves it.” Let us be sure that there is always a “thus saith the Lord.”

But God will not keep silence forever. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him” (Psalm 50:3). “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). We are now in the period of God’s long silence, but when it is broken in that last day, may we have so lived in humble respect of his will that we can hear him say, “**Well done!**”—BN

Five Things Our Children Need

“AND, YE FATHERS, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4).

It only takes a little observation and a casual reading of the newspaper to see that there has been gross neglect on the part of parents in meeting this God-given responsibility toward their children. To bring up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord simply means to train him according to God’s will. The Bible should be the guidebook for the spiritual and moral training the child receives. And there are at least five things in which children need nurture and admonition if they are to develop into responsible citizens, parents and Christians.

First, children need to learn respect for authority. This is true because God demands respect for authority, but it is also true because society cannot function without it. Respect for authority begins at home. Children must be taught to obey their parents. Those who fail to learn respect for authority in the home will be misfits in society. Parents who do not teach their children to respect authority are preparing their children for a life of rebellion against authority. They will not respect the rules and regulations of the school; they will

not respect the laws of the land (Romans 13: 1); and they will not respect the commandments of God. Children may overcome the effects of improper training in this area; but it will be much more difficult and the odds are against them.

Second, children need to learn self-control. Self-control is restraint over one’s impulses, emotions, or desires. It is essential to one’s own well-being. “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him *refrain* his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew (turn away from) evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it” (1 Peter 3:10,11). It is essential to getting along with others. And it is essential to pleasing God (1 Corinthians 9:27). But self-con-

“HE HAD ENCOURAGED MORAL DECLINE IN JUDAH”

“For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD” (2 Chronicles 28:19).

Ahaz gave much money to the king of Assyria to help him, but he received no help. In the time of his distress Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord. He sacrificed to the false gods, “but they were the ruin of him and all Israel” (2 Chronicles 28:23). As long as Israel honored and obeyed God, they prospered. When they turned to the idolatrous religions of their neighbors—against which God had given them warning—they could satisfy their lustful desires—but to the destruction of their nation. This account shows that ungodly leadership encourages moral decline and brings a nation to ruin.

It is evident that our great nation is being encouraged to moral decline. Some have passed laws diametrically opposed to the time-tested moral laws of God. What He has clearly identified as abominable they have passed as laws of the land to be obeyed. When the blind lead the blind both fall into the pit.

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trol, like respect for authority, begins with home training. Restraint must be taught. Parents who fail to teach it will not be guiltless before God. Eli was condemned because he failed to restrain his sons when they did evil (1 Samuel 3:13). David also suffered because he failed to teach self-control to Adonijah. “And his father has not rebuked him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?” (1 Kings 1:6). Little Adonijah had always had what he wanted, and when he wanted the kingdom he attempted to take it. What overindulgent parents fail to realize is that they themselves will suffer the contempt of the very children they overindulge; and that if self-control is not taught at home it will have to be imposed by society, sometimes by incarceration.

Third, children need to learn the Word of God. Here again parents have the primary responsibility. “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, *but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). Yet, multiplied thousands grow up with an ignorance of the Bible. As a result they have no respect for God, nor for His truth in religion and in moral conduct. This is reflected in the materialism, worldliness, and wide-spread immorality that is rampant in the land. Members of the Lord’s church are often negligent in this matter. They not only fail to instruct their children in the Scriptures at home, but they also fail to carry them to Bible classes where others may teach them. We have not outgrown the need to

know God’s will. We have not advanced to the place and time where we can afford to let our children grow up in ignorance of the Bible. The ability to discern between good and evil increases in direct proportion to one’s increase in knowledge and exercise in the word of righteousness (Hebrews 5:12-14). Many people fail to see evil in evil things because they have not learned from God’s word how to discern between good and evil. The ability to obey God’s will and be blessed by Him requires looking into and continuing in His word (James 1:25). Eternal salvation is promised those who do His will (Revelation 22:14). When parents fail to teach the word of God to their children they thus rob them of the ability to discern good and evil, to obey God’s will, and to be saved eternally. The children may in time overcome this deficiency on their own; and then again they may not. Don’t risk it.

Fourth, children need to learn to respect the rights of others. They need to learn at home to respect the rights of their parents, the rights of their brothers and sisters, the rights of their playmates, and the rights of their neighbors. God demands respect for the rights of others. Providing things honest in the sight of all men (Romans 12:17), and working no ill to others (Romans 13:10) involve respect for their rights. But children who fail to learn respect for the rights of others at home, will not respect the rights of society in general. Vandalism, rioting, and such like directly reflect the homes’ failure to teach respect for others’ rights.

Fifth, children need to learn to

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develop a wholesome Christian character. Such development moves in four areas: mental, physical, moral, and spiritual (Luke 2:52). Such development requires a good example set by the parents, instruction in the truth of God, correction in righteousness, and protection from evil teaching and influences. The goal of a wholesome Christian character is individual responsibility. One who receives training in Christian character will meet his responsibility to himself, to his fellowman, and to God. He will live soberly, righ-

teously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11,12). He will be sober in regard to himself, righteous in regard to others, and godly in regard to God. Christian character is character developed according to the teaching of Christ. It takes the Bible as its guide, Christianity as its means, and heaven as its goal. But it begins at home.

Parents fail to teach their children in these five things mainly for two reasons. These perhaps reflect two extremes. (1) They are too busy (or too lazy) to be concerned about their children's future. (2) They are overindulgent and permissive. The

first neglects their children while the latter pampers them. In either case the children grow up without learning respect for authority, self-control, the word of God, respect for the rights of others, and what it means to be Christlike in character. God holds parents responsible for training their children in these things. In fulfilling this responsibility, parents should provide their children with instruction, correction, and restraint according to God's will. And they should provide for them example, and the best possible environment in which to grow up. — Earl Kimbrough

Why Are You Not Saved?

THERE ARE TWO SENSES in which being saved is pictured in the Word of God—being saved NOW, by which we have God's forgiveness of our sins and "every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3-7), and being saved ETERNALLY in heaven when this life is over (Matthew 25:34,46). To be lost is to be charged with your sins (Romans 3:23); to be separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2); and to be cast into eternal hell fire when this life is over (Matthew 25:41-46). In view of this, **WHY ARE YOU NOT SAVED?**

IT IS NOT BECAUSE GOD WILLS SUCH. Satan's determined goal is that you not be saved (1 Peter 5:8), and he will do anything within his power to keep you from being saved. But this is exactly opposite to God's will concerning your eternal soul. He "is not willing that (you) should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). He desires that

you be saved, and that enough to "give his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). He loved you enough that "While (you) were yet in sin, Christ died for (you)" (Romans 5:8f). Christ, in that terrible suffering on the cross, became "the propitiation for (your) sins" (1 John 2:2).

Now that He has made salva-

tion possible (for YOU), He INVITES YOU to take advantage of the same, regardless of your nationality, color, social or financial standing. (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17).

No, God has not arbitrarily excluded any person, the Calvinistic doctrine of "predestination and foreordination" to the contrary, notwithstanding. If you are not saved, YOU CANNOT BLAME GOD!

IT IS NOT BECAUSE OF OTHERS. We are all prone to want to "pass the buck"—blame others for our own failures and mistakes. Granting that one may cause another to "stumble" (and "woe unto him" who does!), would you be willing to face your Judge, blaming others for your lack of preparation to meet Him? No, "every one of us must give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

IDENTIFYING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

By Its Birthday

Daniel prophesied that it would be established during the days of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44). In the time of the Roman Empire Christ said that some who heard him preach would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). This took place on the Pentecost following the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Peter, who spoke as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance on that Pentecost day, accused the people of crucifying the One whom God had made both Lord and Christ. They were cut to the heart, and asked what to do. Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). They that gladly received his word were baptized—about three thousand in number. "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Any church having its beginning either before or after that Pentecost day cannot be the church built by Christ and "purchased with his own blood" (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28).

NOT SAVED?

If you are not saved, IT IS BECAUSE YOU ARE OUT OF THE AREA OF SALVATION. All the human race, other than Noah's family of eight, were drowned because *they were not in the ark*; they were not WHERE God had placed salvation from the flood. And so it is that the alien sinner is not saved *because he is not in Christ*, where redemption and forgiveness are to be found (Ephesians 1:3-7). The erring child of God is not saved (James 5:19f) because he has "gone into a far country" (Luke 15:11ff), allowing sin to "separate (him) and (his) God" (Isaiah 59:1-2). You are not saved, because you are IN SIN, just as the men in the flood were drowned because they were in the water, and not in the ark.

WHY ARE YOU NOT SAVED? Is it because you think you "have plenty of time yet"? If so, it may be that even now God is saying, "Thou fool, this night shalt thy soul be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). In the light of James' warning (James 4:14) that "ye know not what shall be on the morrow," heed Paul's admonition (2 Corinthians 6:2), "NOW is the day of salvation."

Truly, if you are not saved, IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO BE! God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have provided salvation for

you and revealed (in simple terms in the Scriptures) the conditions you must meet to obtain that salvation. You are not saved because you, for one reason or another, as the rich young man of Matthew 19:16-22, are not willing to meet His conditions. Jesus spoke of those who "will not come to me that ye may have life" (John 5:40). In Romans 10:21 the Lord says, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The DISOBEDIENT (YOU) REJECT the salvation which has been provided by Heaven. In your disobedience you are CHOOSING to be lost!

Refuse His provisions no longer—BELIEVING that Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24), REPENT of your sins (Luke 13:3), CONFESS your faith in Christ (Romans 10:9f), and be BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST (Romans 6:1-4); and thus cease to be a servant of sin and become a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:17f). If you are a "prodigal" child of God, "REPENT of this thy wickedness and PRAY God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22); RETURN to your Father, that you may obtain His blessings.

REMEMBER, if you are not saved now, and you should die in that state, you will be LOST FOR ETERNITY! JUST WHY ARE YOU NOT SAVED? — Charles G. Maples, Sr.

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save;
Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities
have made a separation between you and your God, And
your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not
hear. — *Isaiah 59:1-2*

Terms of Pardon

THE EXPRESSION “TERMS OF PARDON” is often used in reference to the conditions set forth in the gospel which man must meet in order to have the remission of sins. The title of this article, however, is used in reference to words found in the scripture which signify pardon from sin.

Forgiveness. On the cross Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness is from a word which means to send forth, or to send away. Thus, when we are divinely forgiven, God in his tender mercy sends away our sins in that he no longer holds them against us. Forgiveness can be considered a personal matter between two persons, between the innocent who has been wronged, and the guilty who is penitent because of the wrong. In relationship to God man is the guilty party because of his sins, but when he repents and complies with God’s requirements set forth in the gospel, God forgives—in a sense sends away his sins. The prayer of Christ on the cross was answered on the day of Pentecost when many who were guilty of crucifying Christ were pricked in their hearts by Peter’s great sermon and were baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2).

Remission. This word sometimes translated from the same word from which *forgiveness* is translated suggests a dismissal, or release from sin. Though remission and forgiveness have the same ul-

timate meaning, remission may seem less personal and more legal. It might suggest the relinquishment of a claim or a debt. When Jesus instituted his supper he said, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). On the day of Pentecost, in response to the question by the people, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:37,38).

Conversion. Conversion means a turning, the process of man changing and turning to God. Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted (turn), and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). In man’s conversion the heart is changed by faith in Christ, for faith in Christ destroys the love of sin. The character is changed by repentance, for repentance destroys the practice of sin. The state is changed by baptism, for in baptism for the remission of sins man is delivered out of the power of

darkness and is translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Acts 22:16; Colossians 1:13).

Regeneration. The word means “born again.” “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). In God’s great plan of salvation he gives man an opportunity to start all over again, to experience a new birth, a spiritual birth wherein he becomes a new creature in Christ, with old things passed away and all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). God provides the means by which man may be regenerated. In birth there must first be the begetting. This is accomplished through the gospel. Paul said, “For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Corinthians 4:15). This begetting leads to obedience, expressed in faith, repentance, baptism, thus, to the birth of water and the Spirit, to the new birth, to regeneration (John 3:5).

Justification. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Man is guilty of breaking God’s law, but when he obeys the gospel, he is justified, that is, declared to be acquitted. Justification has two aspects. It not only means that one is declared to be not guilty, but also to be just, or righteous, as if he had never sinned. Man is justified, or freed from sin, when he obeys “from the heart that form of doctrine,” for Paul says that he

THE WILLING HEART

The time had come for the children of Israel to build the tabernacle—the place where God would be among them, in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. (Numbers 14:14).

Moses announced to the people, “Whoever is of a *willing heart*, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, bronze—all things necessary for the building of the tabernacle. Their heart was stirred, and they did bring “freewill offerings every morning.” The people continued to bring until Moses was told, “The people bring much more than enough” ... “And they were restrained from bringing” (Exodus 35;36). Great things can be accomplished when the people are of a *willing heart* and want to honor and serve their God.

Too often the willing heart becomes the fickle heart, attracted by the allurements and corruptive influence of the world. When this takes place, God’s people are no longer givers of themselves and their substance. The tabernacle has lost its glory, and the once faithful people have defaulted to Satan.

As it was before the coming of Christ, so for some it is the same pattern of human conduct today.

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“then is made free from sin” (Romans 6:17,18). The context shows that “that form of doctrine” to which Paul refers is baptism (Romans 6:3,4). When one obeys from the heart the gospel, and is baptized into the death of Christ, he is justified, acquitted, made free from sin.

Reconciliation. Reconciliation means restored friendship. By sin man has made himself an enemy of God (Isaiah 59:1,2). In his loving kindness and tender mercy God does not have to be reconciled to man. The reverse, however, is true: man, who is the cause of the separation, must be reconciled to God. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). The mourner’s bench idea of religion, which has man begging God for reconciliation, is completely contrary to the scripture.

Redemption. This term suggests freedom from bondage which has been purchased by another. Christ in his great sacrifice paid the ransom price for our freedom from sin—“Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14). He purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Man is redeemed by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). It stands to reason that if one is to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, he must be in that which Christ purchased with his blood. When one obeys the gospel, as did the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, he is redeemed by the blood of Christ, he is added to the church (Acts 2:47).

These words that may be called terms of our pardon can also be called God’s language of love—forgiveness, remission, conversion, regeneration, justification, reconciliation, redemption. — BN

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