

# GOD'S SILENCE

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There are many behaviors and religious practices that are not addressed explicitly in the scriptures. From the very beginning of man's existence on this earth, he has grappled with the question of the meaning of God's silence. When God does not specifically forbid some activity or practice, does that mean man has authority to engage in that practice? Or, do we need God's spoken word to authorize whatever it is that we think, say, and do? A search of God's word reveals the answer to these questions, and also makes it clear that where we spend our eternity depends upon to what the Lord teaches on this subject.

## **Cain's unauthorized offering**

It is a crucial principle taught in the Bible that God's silence is restrictive, not permissive. That is, if God is silent about something, it does not mean that we have authority to do it. We cannot do whatever God has not explicitly condemned. Perhaps the first person to learn this lesson the hard way was Cain. Genesis 4:3-5 says, "And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Why didn't God respect Cain and his offering? Because Cain offered something that God had not authorized! Abel made his offering *by faith* (Heb 11:4), which means God had spoken to him concerning what to offer (Rom 10:17). God also told Cain what to offer, but Cain did *evil* (1 John 3:12), which means he transgressed a law God had given (1 John 3:4). God told them *what* to offer (the firstlings of the flocks), but Cain offered something different. He had no authority to offer the fruit of the ground. God's silence did not give Cain authority to do what he did. To do what God has not authorized is a serious sin.

## **Nadab and Abihu**

Nadab and Abihu were also destroyed for doing something unauthorized. Leviticus 10:1-2 says, "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,*

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(continued)

*which he commanded them not.* And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” They offered “strange fire” to God, meaning it was *foreign* to what God had commanded them. God had not explicitly forbidden the kind of fire they offered. He had not told them *not* to offer that. But God had told them what to offer and had not authorized anything else. When they offered what God *commanded them not*, they were killed. What more could we ask for from God to let us know that His silence is restrictive? We must have His spoken word to give us authority for all that we do. In fact, Colossians 3:17 says exactly that: “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” Doing something in the Lord’s *name* means by *his authority*.

## **The priesthood and authority**

The Levitical priesthood is another demonstration of this principle. In the Law of Moses, God said that the priests were to be the sons of Aaron of the tribe of Levi (Num 8:14-19). He did not say that there could not be priests from the other eleven tribes. But when Jeroboam made priests of these other tribes, God killed him for it (1 Kgs 12:3 1; 13:33-34). God’s silence about the other tribes meant that they could *not* be priests, because God had not authorized it. That is why Jesus, who was of the tribe of Judah, was not a priest while he was on earth: “For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; *of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood*” (Heb 7:13-14). God, through Moses, had spoken “nothing” about Judah having priests which meant that Judah could not have priests. There are many other examples of this in the Bible which clearly demonstrate that God’s silence is restrictive, not permissive. If God is silent about something, it means we do not have His authority to do it, and thus we must not do it!