

About a LAW OF SILENCE

Comments by
BOYCE MOUTON
& CECIL MAY, Jr.
& Ray Downen

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Consider How God Speaks To People Today In Our BROTHERHOOD

By Boyce Mouton

Something is obviously wrong in our Christian community. Jesus prayed that we would be “one,” (John 17:21) but we are *not* one. There are literally hundreds of divisions within the family of God. Incredibly, it seems that the brethren who study the Bible the most are often the most divided. Perhaps a reason for this division is a basic misunderstanding of the new covenant.

W*hatever causes division is wrong!* Jesus prayed that we all would be ONE. What we call the New Testament is NOT the covenant of Christ. Our unity is not based upon the New Testament, but rather upon the one Lord about whom the New Testament is written. Yes, the Bible is inspired by God. Yes, the Bible is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. But the written documents are not the covenant. We should find unity in the new COVENANT.

The Jerusalem church was united in Christ before even one word of the New Testament scriptures was written. Christians in the first century were united even though the canon of Scripture was not settled until the 4th century.

Even after the invention of the printing press, the majority of believers in the world today still do not have a Bible of their own. Millions do not even have a written language. This lack does not keep us from being united in Christ! The majority of people who have Bibles have not read them. If you find this hard to

2 believe, check at your own church and see how many members have ever read the entire Bible.

Many who have read the whole Bible have yet not studied the whole Bible. We who study the Bible are invariably guided by the preconceptions and prejudices of our own religious fellowship. To illustrate: Two Christian brothers told me that they, simply by studying the Bible, had come to identically the same view of the millennium and the rapture. This is remarkable especially since the words “millennium” and “rapture” are not even once found IN the Bible.

These and other considerations make it difficult if not impossible for all of the brethren to understand all of the Bible in identically the same way.

Corinthian Christians were divided because their unity was in men like Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. The only true foundation for Christian unity is Jesus Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Paul faced death with confidence because he knew “Whom” he had believed (2 Timothy 1:12). Our faith is personal, not propositional. “Who” we believe is far more important than what we believe.

We can be wrong about a lot of things as long as we are right about Jesus. If we are wrong about Jesus, it doesn't matter about what else we may be right. If we are born again with seed from our Heavenly Father, we are in the same family with Jesus. Even though we are in every way inferior to Jesus, He is not ashamed to call us His brethren. We have the same father. This is specifically stated in Hebrews 2:11.

How Then Should We Live?

Believers are to “test everything” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This brief study leaves many questions unanswered. It raises issues that are yet to be resolved. The serious student will not avoid these questions, and will

pray to God for wisdom in finding answers. As he is 3
commanded to do by Jesus, he will test everything.

It is important to remember, however, that we are not saved by knowledge. Rather, we are saved by faith. Just because someone is ignorant or uninformed on some point of Biblical teaching does not necessarily imply that he is not Christian.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 commands us to avoid every kind of evil. What does this mean? A five-year-old child will not have the same understanding of these inspired words as will his brother who is 15 years of age. This doctrinal discrepancy does not mean that the two boys are not brothers. It certainly should not be a basis for division between them. The boys are brothers because they have the same father. Fraternity is based upon paternity or adoption.

So also in the religious world we have brothers who are at different levels of wisdom and maturity. The only way they can have identically the same view on every point of Bible doctrine is by turning off their minds and blindly accepting a creed spoken or written by someone else. This is obviously wrong. It is the very basis of denominationalism. True unity is not in a preacher some of us like, as in Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, but in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The church at Corinth had many problems. In fact, they seem to have been plagued with more problems than any other church mentioned in apostolic epistles. They were divided. They tolerated fornication. They had serious problems over a wide variety of important issues. They needed teaching on marriage, idolatry, the Lord's Supper, the work of women, spiritual gifts, and even the resurrection. Their most pressing need, however, was not more knowledge. They needed more LOVE. As we all know, knowledge

4 puffs up, but love builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1).
The apostle exhorts:

“Eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

“If I give all I possess to the poor, and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8).

Summary Thoughts

The first 39 books of the Bible are NOT the “Old Testament.” The final 27 books of the Bible are NOT the “New Testament.” The Bible is inspired by God. It is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. It, however, is NOT a covenant between God and man.

Even though the Bible is not a covenant, study of the Bible is still desirable and necessary. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 and emphasized that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Regarding earthly matters, it is important to understand the nature of contracts (covenants). Many have lost a house, or a car, or incurred great debts simply because they did not understand the nature of a contract or covenant to which they agreed. If this is important regarding earthly covenants, and it is, it is even more important regarding our covenant with God.

Like all spiritual teaching, this little booklet should be approached with skepticism. We are commanded in Scripture to “prove (test) all things.” Let us each as did the noble Bereans in an earlier day search the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so.

• BOYCE MOUTON.

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (Colossians 3:14,15).

In MAGNOLIA MESSENGER for Winter, 2014, a question is asked and answered by CECIL MAY, Jr. that I want to share with you. QUESTION: Which came first, the Bible or the church? Obviously the church produced the Bible, not the other way around as is generally supposed. Problem proposed by (A.B.) And then (B.S.) speaks to bring us to the question of the hour: The early church could not have used the argument from silence the way “we” do, because the 27 books of the New Testament were not declared canonical until the 4th century.

CECIL MAY JR. speaks to this question.

The church was in existence before any of the books of the New Testament, but the message the New Testament contains both preceded and produced the church.

People were redeemed and became part of the church at its beginning by hearing and obeying apostolic teaching. From the very first day of the church’s existence, the members “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:41,42).

6 Jesus had promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them (John 14:26) and would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). The apostles' teaching, therefore was "breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

In the earliest days, the apostles themselves did the teaching and preaching. Later they were joined by "prophets," people who were given the gift of inspired speech and other miraculous gifts by apostles laying their hands on them (1 Corinthians 14:3; 2 Timothy 1:6). Using the language of the New Testament itself, the church was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

The apostles and those who heard and obeyed them understood that the apostolic preaching was from God. Paul told the Thessalonians, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The message they first preached orally and later wrote is the same message. It was still the word of God after they wrote it. "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul says "the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:3-5).

The New Testament Scriptures are included in the statement that “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). The apostle Peter included Paul’s epistles in the category of Scripture (1 Peter 3:15,16). Paul quotes “Scripture” citing both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Matthew 10:10 (1 Timothy 5:18).

The apostles’ teaching was uniformly proclaimed to all the churches wherever the apostles and prophets preached. Paul wrote of “my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church” (1 Corinthians 4:17)... So the apostles’ and prophets’ oral teaching brought the church into being, taught the saints how to live day by day and how to assemble (1 Corinthians 14:26). We now are subject to that same teaching through their written words. Brother May continues in Magnolia Messenger.

And now RAY comments: Surely we all realize that we should study what the apostles wrote and taught and follow their example and teaching. And surely we should realize that they never taught by what they did NOT say. Silence means nothing. If a thing is wrong, it’s wrong because God has revealed IN WORDS that it’s wrong. If a thing is right, God may or MAY NOT speak about it. But the things taught by the apostles are all worthwhile and deserving of consideration by ones who seek to please Jesus.

There is no law of silence in the Way of Christ. Nothing is wrong just because it’s not mentioned by apostles. Nothing is forbidden because it’s not commanded. Some create laws based on what the apostles did NOT teach, but their laws are strictly human and have no bearing on our pleasing or displeasing God.

What is NECESSARY is spoken of. Apostles spoke to tell us what will please God. We do well to study with care what the apostles wrote, and to seek to follow their

8 teaching in all ways. We have no business making laws based on what the apostles did NOT say. There is no law of silence for us who follow Jesus as Lord.

Ray recommends the reading of a “devotional” book about Revelation by Matt Proctor. Printed by College Press of Joplin, MO, the book **Victorious** encourages the reading of John’s Revelation and points out many helpful things about the Revelation.

Other brief Bible studies like this one are also available from Mission Outreach: [NB-Bo1](#) “How to ENTER Christ’s Way,” [NB-Bo2](#) “Preface to ‘Were You BURIED with Christ?’,” [NB-Bo3](#) “Introducing ‘Do Peter’s KEYS still open the Way?’,” [CD-Co4](#)–“What Does Jesus Say About Himself?” [CD-Go1](#)–“What About False Teachers?” [CD-Co5](#)–“What About True Apostles?”

All currently available Viewpoint tracts & booklets are linked at <http://missionoutreach.org/CU-Go1.pdf>. Topics are: **CD**-Doctrines of Jesus & His apostles, **CE**-Evangelism by Christians, **CU**-Unity IN CHRIST, **CW**-Worship of the Christ (It’s by serving Him), **DL**-Daily Living by Christians, **FA**-Salvation Is Not by Faith Alone, **HS**-Holy Spirit Working in Christians, **NB**-New Birth INTO Christ’s church, and **PB**-Proper Bible Understanding.

Your attention is invited to booklets on becoming a Christian. One title is “Three Times Peter used the KEYS of the Kingdom” (Viewpoint study [NB-Ko1](#)). You may also be interested in “We are invited to enter into COVENANT with God,” by Boyce Mouton (Viewpoint study [CD-Fo3](#)). As does this study, it speaks of freedom in Christ based on love of truth and love of the unity Jesus planned for us.

[CW-Lo2](#) is a study by Erwin Bishop and others, “When You Come Together.” It addresses the fact that our worship should be lifelong and constant rather than only when we are “in church” with other Christians. [CD-D21](#) is “Concerning FELLOWSHIP in the Supper of Remembrance.” And [PB-Wo1](#) is “Were You RAISED With Christ?” At amazon.com on the internet you could purchase the book, **RAISED INTO NEW LIFE**, by Ray Downen (Viewpoint study [PB-Zo1](#)). Or “Should Any CHRISTIAN Ever Be Baptized?” ([NB-Oo1](#)).

If we do not die to sin, we cannot live with Jesus Christ! Jesus built a “family of faith” (the word we use is “church”) where those who believe in Him gather to help one another in the Way which leads to life. Please join us in a Christian church. In Joplin, Missouri Ray attends Iron Gates Christian Church which meets at 2310 Iron Gates Road. It’s one of the many fine churches in the Joplin area. He also recommends Villa Heights Christian, Mt. Hope Church of Christ, 26th & Connecticut Church of Christ, and others too numerous to mention.



PHOTO BY
LYLE ENSMINGER

*A Viewpoint
Brief Bible Study
from Ray Downen*

Mission Outreach Publications

1148 W 28th St, Apt. 301 * Joplin MO 64804-1613
mopmailing@gmail.com * missionoutreach.org

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