

The Ministry of Silence

Lamentations. 3:28

He sitteth alone and keepeth silence,
because he hath borne it upon him.

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Forward

Silence is always appropriate in the presence of the Eternal. It has often been said "silence is golden.

We live in a noisy world. We're bombarded constantly with sounds from cars, our neighbor's dog barking, crying babies, phones ringing and music playing.

It is easy to ignore what's going on inside of you when there are so many things demanding your attention. But when there's only silence, we have a much harder time with the quiet voice of our soul, telling us what's wrong.

Sometimes, we need to face life's issues in some silence, a situation where we cannot drown our inner voices in noise.

God sometimes yells, but more often He whispers. With all the noise around us, it's hard to hear and recognize His voice.

Proverbs 17:28

Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.

The ministry of silence is a powerful tool that is often overlooked in haste. Serving people well does not equate to supplying answers or words of wisdom each and every time.

Proverbs 10:19

Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!

Chapter 1



Those not speaking may seem intelligent

Proverbs 17:28

Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.

This proverb highlights several benefits of keeping quiet:

- (1) It is the best policy if you have nothing worthwhile to say;
- (2) It allows you the opportunity to listen and learn;
- (3) It gives you something in common with those who are wiser. Make sure to pause to think and to listen so that when you do speak, you will have something important to say.

Set alone in silence

Lamentations 3:28

Let them sit alone in silence beneath the Lord's demands.

To “bear the yoke” means to willingly come under God’s discipline and learn what he wants to teach. This involves several important factors:

- (1) Silent reflection on what God wants,
- (2) Repentant humility,
- (3) Self-control in the face of adversity, and
- (4) Confident patience, depending on the divine Teacher to bring about loving lessons in our lives. God has several long-term and short-term lessons for you right now.

Are you doing your homework?

When God is silent, he still cares

Psalms 50:21

While you did all this, I remained silent, and you thought I didn't care. But now I will rebuke you, listing all my charges against you.

Some people glibly recite God’s laws but are filled with deceit and evil. They claim his promises but refuse to obey him. This is sin, and God will judge people for it. We too are hypocrites when we are not what we

claim to be. To let this inconsistency remain shows that we are not true followers of God.

At times God seems silent. By his silence he is not condoning sin, nor is he indifferent to it. Instead, he is withholding deserved punishment, giving time for people to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and wants them to turn from evil (Ezekiel 33:11). But his silence does not last forever—a time of punishment will surely come.

When quiet, who can make trouble?

Job 34:29

When he is quiet, who can make trouble? But when he hides his face, who can find him?

Correction may bring remembrance

Isaiah 57:11

Why were you more afraid of them than of me? How is it that you don't even remember me or think about me? Is it because I have not corrected you that you have no fear of me?

God says that he will expose their righteousness and works for what they really were—mere pretensions of doing good. Isaiah warned these people that their righteousness and works would not save them any more than their weak, worthless idols.

We cannot gain our salvation through good deeds because our best deeds are not good enough to outweigh our sins. Salvation is a gift from God, received only through faith in Christ, not good deeds (Ephes. 2:8-9).

God may approach with the sound of thunder

Psalms 50:3

Our God approaches with the noise of thunder. Fire devours everything in his way, and a great storm rages around him.

God judges people for treating him lightly. First, he speaks to the superficially religious people who bring their sacrifices but are only going through the motions (Psalm 50:1-15).

They do not honor God with true praise and thankfulness. Second, he chides wicked, hardhearted people for their evil words and immoral lives (Psalm 50:16-22). He asks the superficially religious for genuine thanksgiving and trust, and he warns the evil people to consider their deeds, lest he destroy them in his anger.

This psalm begins as though God is finally ready to judge the evil people on earth. But surprisingly, we read that God's great fury is leveled against his own people (or at least those who claim to be his). God's judgment must begin with his own people (1 Peter 4:17).

Chapter 2



I cannot stop praying for Zion

Isaiah 62:1

Because I love Zion, because my heart yearns for Jerusalem, I cannot remain silent. I will not stop praying for her until her righteousness shines like the dawn, and her salvation blazes like a burning torch.

If so, Isaiah's zeal for his people and his desire to see the work of salvation completed caused him to pray without resting, hoping that Israel would be saved.

We should have Isaiah's zeal to see God's will done. This is what we mean when we pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is good to keep praying persistently for others.

The Lord will not always stand silent

Isaiah 65:6-7

"Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them for their own sins and for

those of their ancestors," says the Lord.

"For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!"

God said he would pay back the people for their sins. Judgment is not our job but his because he alone is just. Who else knows our hearts and minds? Who else knows what is a completely fair reward or punishment?

Lord, do not stay silent

Psalms 35:22

O Lord, you know all about this. Do not stay silent. Don't abandon me now, O Lord.

David cried out to God to defend him when people wrongly accused him.

If you are unjustly accused, your natural reaction may be to lash out in revenge or to give a detailed defense of your every move. Instead, ask God to fight the battle for you.

He will clear your name in the eyes of those who really matter.

Chapter 3



Oh Lord be not silent and inactive

Psalms 83:1

O God, don't sit idly by, silent and inactive!

Lord, do not stand aloof

Psalms 109:1

O God, whom I praise, don't stand silent and aloof

David endured many false accusations (1 Samuel 22:7-13; 2 Samuel 15:3-4), as did Christ centuries later (Matthew 26:59-61; Matthew 27:39-44). Psalm 109:8 is quoted in Acts 1:20 as being fulfilled in Judas's death.

Lord, will you continue to be silent?

Isaiah 64:12

After all this, Lord, must you still refuse to help us? Will you continue to be silent and punish us?

Our best efforts are still infected with sin. Our only hope, therefore, is faith in Jesus Christ, who can cleanse us and bring us into God's presence (read Romans 3).

This passage can mean that God will not reject us if we come to him in faith, nor that he despises our efforts to please him.

It means that if we come to him demanding acceptance on the basis of our "good" conduct, God will point out that our righteousness is nothing compared to his infinite righteousness.

This message is primarily for the unrepentant person, not the true follower of God.

Be not silent when the wicked destroy

Habakkuk 1:13

You are perfectly just in this. But will you, who cannot allow sin in any form, stand idly by while they swallow us up? Should you be silent while the wicked destroy people who are more righteous than they?

Judah's forthcoming punishment would be at the hands of the Babylonians. Habakkuk was appalled that God would use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish Judah.

But the Babylonians did not know they were being used by God to help Judah return to him, and Babylon's pride in its victories would be its downfall.

Evil is self-destructive, and it is never beyond God's control. God may use whatever unusual instrument he chooses to correct or punish us.

When we deserve punishment or correction, how can we complain about the kind of "rod" God uses on us?

The wicked shall perish in the darkness

1 Samuel 2:9

He will protect his godly ones, but the wicked will perish in darkness.
No one will succeed by strength alone.

No doubt as Hannah said these words, she was thinking of Peninnah's arrogance and chiding. Hannah did not have to get even with Peninnah. She knew that God is all knowing, and that he will judge all sin and pride. Hannah wisely left judgment up to God.

Resist the temptation to take justice into your own hands. God will weigh your deeds as well as those who have wronged you.

Because we live in a world where evil abounds and a nuclear holocaust always threatens, we may forget that God is in control. Hannah saw God as:

(1) solid as a rock (1 Samuel 2:2),

(2) the one who knows what we do (1 Samuel 2:3),

(3) sovereign over all the affairs of people (1 Samuel 2:4-8), and

(4) the supreme judge who administers perfect justice (1 Samuel 2:10).

Remembering God's sovereign control helps us put both world and personal events in perspective.

God will silence those who seek revenge

Psalms 8:2

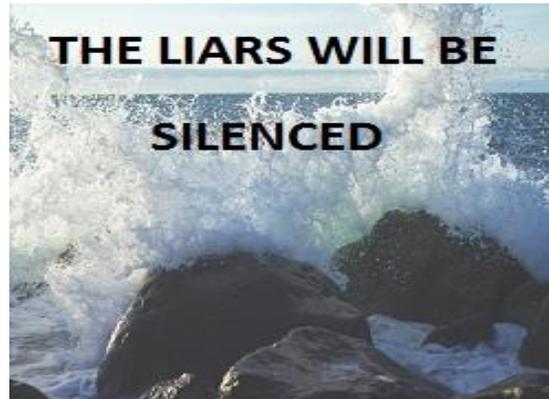
You have taught children and nursing infants to give you praise.
They silence your enemies who were seeking revenge.

Children are able to trust and praise God without doubts or reservations.

As we get older, many of us find this more and more difficult to do. Ask God to give you childlike faith, removing any barriers to having a closer walk with him.

Get in touch with this childlike quality in yourself so that you can be more expressive.

Chapter 4



The liars will be silenced

Psalms 63:11

But the king will rejoice in God. All who trust in him will praise him, while liars will be silenced.

A cure for sleepless nights is to turn our thoughts to God. There are many reasons we can't sleep—illness, stress, worry—but sleepless nights can be turned into quiet times of reflection and worship. Use them to review how God has guided and helped you.

The wicked will be stricken silent

Psalms 107:42

The godly will see these things and be glad, while the wicked are stricken silent.

Songs of ruthless people are stilled

Isaiah 25:5-6

Or like the relentless heat of the desert. But you silence the roar of foreign nations. You cool the land with the shade of a cloud. So the boastful songs of ruthless people are stilled.

In Jerusalem, the Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef.

Here is a marvelous prophecy of “all peoples”—Gentiles and Jews together—at God’s Messianic feast, celebrating the overthrow of evil and the joy of eternity with God.

It shows that God intended his saving message to go out to the whole world, not just to the Jews.

During the feast, God will end death forever (Isaiah 25:7-8). The people who participate in this great feast will be those who have been living by faith. That is why they say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us” (Isaiah 25:9).

Daughters of Babylon now sit in silence

Isaiah 47:5

"O daughter of Babylon, sit now in darkness and silence. Never again will you be known as the queen of kingdoms.

Here Isaiah predicted the fall of Babylon more than 150 years before it happened. At this time, Babylon had not yet emerged as the mightiest force on earth, the proud empire that would destroy Judah and Jerusalem. But the Babylonians, Judah's captors, would become captives themselves in 539 B.C. God, not Babylon, has the ultimate power. He used Babylon to punish his sinful people; he would use Medo-Persia to destroy Babylon and free his people.

Caught up in the pursuit of power and pleasure, Babylon believed in its own greatness and claimed to be the *only* power on earth.

Babylon felt completely secure, and Nebuchadnezzar, its king, exalted himself as a "god." But the true God taught Nebuchadnezzar a powerful lesson by taking everything away from him (Daniel 4:28-37).

Our society is addicted to pleasure and power, but these can quickly pass away. Look at your own life and ask yourself how you can be more responsible with the talents and possessions God has given you. How can you use your life for God's honor rather than your own?

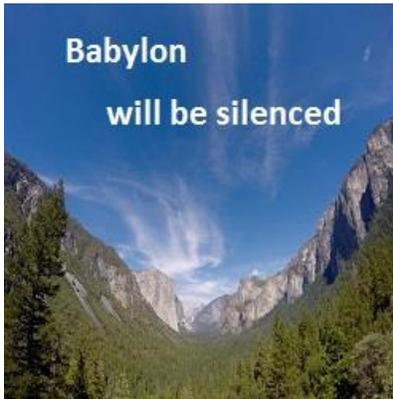
The city of madmen will be silenced

Jeremiah 48:2

No one will ever brag about Moab again, for there is a plot against her life. In Heshbon plans have been completed to destroy her. 'Come,' they say, 'we will cut her off from being a nation.' The city of Madmen, too, will be silenced; the sword will follow you there.

The Moabites were descendants of Lot through an incestuous relationship with one of his daughters (Genesis 19:30-37). They led the Israelites into idolatry (Numbers 25:1-3) and joined the bands of raiders Nebuchadnezzar sent into Judah in 602 B.C. They were later conquered by Babylon and disappeared as a nation.

Chapter 5



Babylon will be silenced

Jeremiah 51:55

For the Lord is destroying Babylon. He will silence her. Waves of enemies pound against her; the noise of battle rings through the city.

The people were paralyzed with guilt over their past. The Babylonian armies had desecrated the temple, and the people were ashamed to return to Jerusalem. But God told them to return to the city because he would destroy Babylon for its sins.

The Sadducees were silenced

Matthew 22:34

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they thought up a fresh question of their own to ask him.

Mark 3:4

Then he turned to his critics and asked, "Is it legal to do good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing harm? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?" But they wouldn't answer him.

We might think the Pharisees would have been glad to see the Sadducees silenced. Jesus finally answered the question that the Sadducees had always used to trap them. But the Pharisees were too proud to be impressed. Jesus' answer gave them a theological victory over the Sadducees, but they were more interested in defeating Jesus than in learning the truth.

The Lord's answer bring silence

Luke 20:26

So they failed to trap him in the presence of the people. Instead, they were amazed by his answer, and they were silenced.

Jesus turned his enemies' attempt to trap him into a powerful lesson: As God's followers, we have legitimate obligations to both God and the government. But it is important to keep our priorities straight. When the two authorities conflict, our duty to God always must come before our duty to the government.

These spies, pretending to be honest men, flattered Jesus before asking him their trick question, hoping to catch him off guard. But Jesus knew what they were trying to do and stayed out of their trap. Beware of flattery. With God's help, you can detect it and avoid the trap that often follows.

This was a loaded question. The Jews were enraged at having to pay taxes to Rome, thus supporting the pagan government and its gods.

They hated the system that allowed tax collectors to charge exorbitant rates and keep the extra for themselves. If Jesus said they should pay taxes, they would call him a traitor to their nation and their religion.

But if he said they should not, they could report him to Rome as a rebel. Jesus' questioners thought they had him this time, but he outwitted them again

The council had nothing to say

Acts 4:14

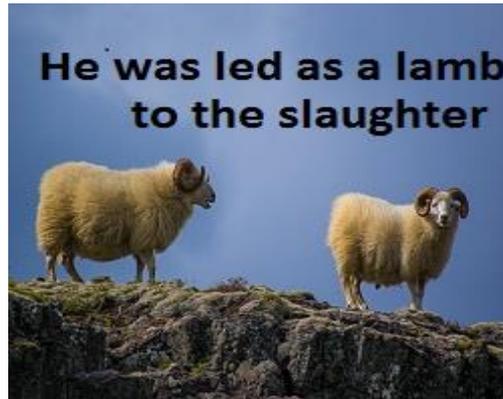
But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the council had nothing to say.

Knowing that Peter and John were unschooled, the council was amazed at what being with Jesus had done for them. A changed life convinces people of Christ's power. One of your greatest testimonies is the difference others see in your life and attitudes since you have believed in Christ.

Although the evidence was overwhelming and irrefutable (changed lives and a healed man), the religious leaders refused to believe in Christ and continued to try to suppress the truth.

Don't be surprised if some people reject you and your positive witness for Christ. When minds are closed, even the clearest presentation of the facts can't open them. But don't give up either. Pray for those people and continue to spread the gospel.

Chapter 6



He was led as a lamb to the slaughter

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

As a lamb, he is silent

Acts 8:32

The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:
"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Philip found the Ethiopian man reading Scripture. Taking advantage of this opportunity to explain the gospel, Philip asked the man if he understood what he was reading.

Philip

- (1) Followed the Spirit's leading,
- (2) Began the discussion from where the man was (immersed in the prophecies of Isaiah), and
- (3) Explained how Jesus Christ fulfilled Isaiah's prophecies.

When we share the gospel, we should start where the other person's concerns are focused. Then we can bring the gospel to bear on those concerns.

The eunuch asked Philip to explain a passage of Scripture that he did not understand. When we have trouble understanding the Bible, we should ask others to help us. We must never let our insecurity or pride get in the way of understanding God's Word.

Some think that the Old Testament is not relevant today, but Philip led this man to faith in Jesus Christ by using the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is found in the pages of both the Old and New Testaments. God's entire Word is applicable to all people in all ages.

Don't avoid or neglect to use the Old Testament. It too is God's Word.

Jesus remained silent

Matthew 26:63

But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God that you tell us whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Jesus declared his royalty in no uncertain terms. In saying he was the Son of Man, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, as his listeners well knew. He knew this declaration would be his undoing, but he did not panic. He was calm, courageous, and determined.

Jesus remained silent

Mark 14:61

Jesus made no reply. Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God?"

To the first question, Jesus made no reply because it was based on confusing and erroneous evidence. Not answering was wiser than trying to clarify the fabricated accusations.

But if Jesus had refused to answer the second question, it could have been taken as a denial of his mission. Instead, his answer predicted a powerful role reversal.

Sitting on the right hand of power, he would come to judge his accusers, and they would have to answer *his* questions (Psalm 110:1; Rev. 20:11-13).

Of all people, the high priest and members of the Sanhedrin should have recognized the Messiah because they knew the Scriptures thoroughly. Their job was to point people to God, but they were more concerned about preserving their reputations and holding on to their authority.

They valued human security more than eternal security.

The governor was surprised at his silence

Matthew 27:14

But Jesus said nothing, much to the governor's great surprise.

Jesus' silence fulfilled the words of the prophet (Isaiah 53:7). Pilate was amazed that Jesus didn't try to defend himself. He recognized the obvious plot against Jesus and wanted to let him go, but Pilate was already under pressure from Rome to keep peace in his territory. The last thing he needed was a rebellion over this quiet and seemingly insignificant man.

Jesus said nothing

Mark 15:4-5

And Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to say something? What about all these charges against you?" But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise.

The Jewish leaders had to fabricate new accusations against Jesus when they brought him before Pilate. The charge of blasphemy would mean nothing to the Roman governor, so they accused Jesus of three other crimes:

- (1) Encouraging the people not to pay their taxes to Rome,
- (2) Claiming he was a king—"the king of the Jews," and

- (3) Causing riots all over the countryside. Tax evasion, treason, and terrorism—all these would be cause for Pilate's concern (see also Luke 23:2).

Why didn't Jesus answer Pilate's questions? It would have been futile to answer, and the time had come to give his life to save the world. Jesus had no reason to try to prolong the trial or save himself.

His was the ultimate example of self-assurance and peace, which no ordinary criminal could imitate. Nothing would stop him from completing the work he had come to earth to do (Isaiah 53:7).

Jesus gave no answer

John 19:9

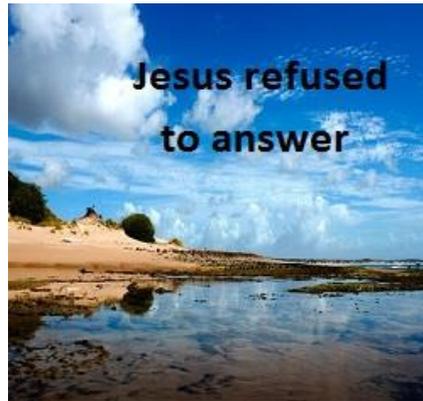
He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer.

Throughout the trial we see that Jesus was in control, not Pilate or the religious leaders. Pilate vacillated, the Jewish leaders reacted out of hatred and anger, but Jesus remained composed.

He knew the truth, he knew God's plan, and he knew the reason for his trial. Despite the pressure and persecution, Jesus remained unmoved.

It was really Pilate and the religious leaders who were on trial, not Jesus. When you are questioned or ridiculed because of your faith, remember that while you may be on trial before your accusers, they are on trial before God.

Chapter 7



Jesus refused to answer

Luke 23:9

He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer.

Jesus commanded the demon to be silent

Mark 1:25-26

Jesus cut him short. "Be silent! Come out of the man." At that, the evil spirit screamed and threw the man into a convulsion, but then he left him.

Many psychologists dismiss all accounts of demon-possession as a primitive way to describe mental illness. Although throughout history mental illness has often been wrongly diagnosed as demon-possession, clearly a hostile outside force controlled the man described here.

Mark emphasized Jesus' conflict with evil powers to show his superiority over them, so he recorded many stories about Jesus driving out evil spirits. Jesus didn't have to conduct an elaborate exorcism ritual. His word was enough to send out the demons.

The evil spirit knew at once that Jesus was the Holy One of God. By including this event in his Gospel, Mark was establishing Jesus' credentials, showing that even the spiritual underworld recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

The demon came out in silence

Luke 4:35

Jesus cut him short. "Be silent!" he told the demon. "Come out of the man!" The demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it left him without hurting him further.

The people were amazed at Jesus' authority to drive out demons—evil spirits ruled by Satan and sent to harass people and tempt them to sin. Demons are thought to be fallen angels who have joined Satan in rebellion against God. Others believe they are evil spirits from the pit and will be sent back to the pit by God at the end time of testing.

Demons can cause a person to become mute, deaf, blind, or insane. Jesus faced many demons during his time on earth, and he always exerted authority over them. Not only did the evil spirit leave this man; Luke records that the man was not even injured.

Evil permeates our world, and it is no wonder that people are often fearful. But Jesus' power is far greater than Satan's. The first step toward conquering fear of evil is to recognize Jesus' authority and power. He has overcome all evil, including Satan himself.

Jesus calmed the wind

Mark 4:39

When he woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, "Quiet down!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.

The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level and is surrounded by hills. Winds blowing across the land intensify close to the sea, often causing violent and unexpected storms. The disciples were seasoned fishermen who had spent their lives fishing on this huge lake, but during this squall they panicked.

The disciples panicked because the storm threatened to destroy them all, and Jesus seemed unaware and unconcerned. There was a physical storm, but storms come in other forms. Think about the storms in your life—the situations that cause you great anxiety.

Whatever your difficulty, you have two options: You can worry and assume that Jesus no longer cares, or you can resist fear, putting your trust in him. When you feel like panicking, confess your need for God and then trust him to care for you.

Joshua commanded silence

Joshua 6:10

"Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!"

God told Joshua that Jericho was already delivered into his hands—the enemy was already defeated! What confidence Joshua must have had as he went into battle! Christians also fight against a defeated enemy.

Our enemy, Satan, has been defeated by Christ (Romans 8:37-39; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8).

Although we still fight battles every day and sin runs rampant in the world, we have the assurance that the war has already been won. We do not have to be paralyzed by the power of a defeated enemy; we can overcome him through Christ's power.

Why did God give Joshua all these complicated instructions for the battle? Several answers are possible:

- (1) God was making it undeniably clear that the battle would depend upon him, and not upon Israel's weapons and expertise. This is why priests carrying the ark, not soldiers, led the Israelites into battle.
- (2) God's method of taking the city accentuated the terror already felt in Jericho (Joshua 2:9).
- (3) This strange military maneuver was a test of the Israelites' faith and their willingness to follow God completely.

The blowing of the trumpets had a special significance. They had been instructed to blow the same trumpets used in the religious festivals in their battles to remind them that their victory would come from the Lord, not their own military might (Numbers 10:9).

Moses, quit crying out and move

Exodus 14:14-15

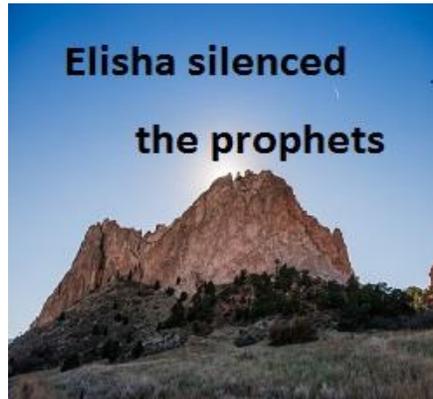
The Lord himself will fight for you. You won't have to lift a finger in your defense!"

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!"

Six hundred Egyptian war chariots were bearing down on the helpless Israelites, who were trapped between the mountains and the sea. The war chariots each carried two people—one to drive and one to fight. These chariots were made of a wood or leather cab placed over two wheels, and horses pulled them.

These were the armored tanks of Bible times. But even their power was no match for God, who destroyed both the chariots and their soldiers.

Chapter 8



Elisha silenced the prophets

2 Kings 2:3

The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" "Quiet!" Elisha answered. "Of course I know it."

A "company of the prophets" was like a school, a gathering of disciples around a recognized prophet, such as Elijah or Elisha.

These companies of prophets, located throughout the country, helped stem the tide of spiritual and moral decline in the nation begun under Jeroboam.

The students at Bethel were eyewitnesses to the succession of the prophetic ministry from Elijah to Elisha.

There was silence in heaven

Revelation 8:1

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence throughout heaven for about half an hour.

When the seventh seal is opened, the seven trumpet judgments are revealed. In the same way, the seventh trumpet will announce the seven bowl judgments in Rev. 11:15 and Rev. 16:1-21.

The trumpet judgments, like the seal judgments, are only partial. God's final and complete judgment has not yet come.

The princes stood in silence

Job 29:7-10

"Those were the days when I went to the city gate and took my place among the honored leaders.

The young stepped aside when they saw me, and even the aged rose in respect at my coming.

The princes stood in silence and put their hands over their mouths. The highest officials of the city stood quietly, holding their tongues in respect.

Job was walking a fine line between bragging about past accomplishments and recalling good deeds in order to answer the charges against him. Job's one weakness throughout his conversations is that he came dangerously close to pride.

Pride is especially deceptive when we are doing right. But it separates us from God by making us think we're better than we really are. Then comes the tendency to trust our own opinions, which leads to other kinds of sin. While it is not wrong to recount past deeds, it is far better to recount God's blessings to us. This will help keep us from inadvertently falling into pride.

Because of this description of Job's work, many commentators believe that Job was a judge. In Job's day, a judge served as both a city councilman and a magistrate, helping to manage the community and settle disputes.

In most cases, this was not a full-time position but a part-time post held on the basis of one's respect and standing in the area.

Too much talk fosters sin

Proverbs 10:19

Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!

Words from a good person are valuable ("choice silver"). A lot of poor advice is worth less than a little good advice.

It is easy to get opinions from people who will tell us only what they think will please us, but such advice is not helpful. Instead we should look for those who will speak the truth, even when it hurts.

Think about the people to whom you go for advice. What do you expect to hear from them?

1 Samuel 10:27

But there were some wicked men who complained, "How can this man save us?" And they despised him and refused to bring him gifts. But Saul ignored them.

Some men became Saul's constant companions, while others despised him. Criticism will always be directed toward those who lead because they are out in front.

At this time, Saul took no notice of those who seemed to be against him, although later he would become consumed with jealousy (1 Samuel 19:1-3; 1 Samuel 26:17-21).

As you lead, listen to constructive criticism, but don't spend valuable time and energy worrying about those who may oppose you. Instead, focus your attention on those who are ready and willing to help.

Being quiet is the smartest thing you can do.

Job 13:5

Please be quiet! That's the smartest thing you could do.

Job compared his three friends to physicians who did not know what they were doing. They were like eye surgeons trying to perform open-heart surgery.

Many of their ideas about God were true, but they did not apply to Job's situation. They were right to say that God is just. They were right to say God punishes sin.

But they were wrong to assume that Job's suffering was a just punishment for his sin. They took a true principle and applied it wrongly, ignoring the vast differences in human circumstances.

We must be careful and compassionate in how we apply Biblical condemnations to others; we must be slow to judge.

Keep silent and I will teach you wisdom

Job 33:31-33

Mark this well, Job. Listen to me, and let me say more.

But if you have anything to say, go ahead. I want to hear it, for I am anxious to see you justified.

But if not, then listen to me. Keep silent and I will teach you wisdom!"

Elihu's point was that God had spoken again and again. He spoke in dreams and visions (Job 33:15-18), through suffering (Job 33:19-22), and by mediating angels (Job 33:23-24). Job already knew that. Elihu accused Job of not listening to God, which was not true.

A person with good sense remains silent

Proverbs 11:12

It is foolish to belittle a neighbor; a person with good sense remains silent.

Chapter 9



I will keep silent

Psalms 39:9

I am silent before you; I won't say a word. For my punishment is from you.

What did David mean when he asked God to remove the “scourge” because he was overcome by the “blow” of God’s hand?

It may be a picture of the difficulties David was facing that caused him to feel as if he were being struck. Just as a loving father carefully disciplines his children, so God corrects us (Hebrews 12:5-9).

I will cover your mouth with silence

Ezekiel 16:63

You will remember your sins and cover your mouth in silence and shame when I forgive you of all that you have done, says the Sovereign Lord."

Although the people had broken their promises and did not deserve anything but punishment, God would not break his promises.

If the people turned back to him, he would again forgive them and renew his covenant. This covenant was put into effect when Jesus paid for the sins of all mankind by his death on the cross (Hebrews 10:8-10).

No one is beyond the reach of God's forgiveness. Although we don't deserve anything but punishment for our sins, God's arms are still outstretched.

He will not break his promise to give us salvation and forgiveness if we repent and turn to him.

In anger remain silent

Psalms 4:4

Don't sin by letting anger gain control over you. Think about it overnight and remain silent.

The godly are those who are faithful and devoted to God. David knew that God would hear him when he called and would answer him.

We too can be confident that God listens to our prayers and answers when we call on him. Sometimes we think that God will not hear us because we have fallen short of his high standards for holy living. But if we have trusted Christ for salvation, God has forgiven us, and he will listen to us.

When you feel as though your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, remember that as a believer you have been set apart by God and that he loves you.

He hears and answers, although his answers may not be what you expect. Look at your problems in the light of God's power instead of looking at God in the shadow of your problems.

They remained silent and told no one.

Luke 9:36

When the voice died away, Jesus was there alone. They didn't tell anyone what they had seen until long after this happened.

They quietly listened

Acts 15:12

There was no further discussion, and everyone listened as Barnabas and Paul told about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Please pray this Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

