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Silent Before Him

by Rick Liggin

"But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him" (Habakkuk 2:20).

In some churches, this text is often quoted or sung at the beginning of the worship as if it meant that people must be "quiet in church." But being "quiet in church" just is not the point of this verse at all. In the context, Habakkuk contrasts the dumb wooden idols created by men with the true God who sits on His throne. His point is that God, the Creator, is in His holy temple, the place from which He speaks; His creatures must therefore shut up and listen to Him! Men do not have the authority to command, nor do the idols that they have created. God is the One - the only One - who speaks with authority; He is the only One who has the right to command, and we (His creatures) must listen to and obey His voice.

You see, the point of this text is not related to our demeanor in church services. It has to do with God's authority - to which men must quietly submit. Man must not rebel against God, nor must he try to speak for God. What man must do is humbly listen to and obey the voice of God - and that's all.

When you see this as the real point of the verse, you will see that it relates a lesson that modern religious men need to hear.

This, and many other Scriptures, makes it clear that we cannot have God's approval unless we're willing to be quiet while He speaks. Jesus, for example, taught that we must submit to the authority of God in order to reach heaven; He said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Note that it is the Father's will that must be done, not my will or your will or the will of some dumb idol. And, according to the New Testament, we cannot know God's will without His revealing it to us, which He has done in the written Word (1 Cor. 2:11-13). The written Word, then, because it accurately relates God's will to us, becomes that which must be obeyed. And without obeying His will we cannot have His approval.

And so, when we start trying to figure out how to acceptably serve God, we must have His Word on it. When we start doing things that we do not have His permission to do, then we are not being silent before Him.

And right here is where most people in our religious world today get in trouble: They do not want to be silent before the Lord. They will not shut up long enough to hear what God wants, because they're too busy inventing their own way of serving Him. Hundreds upon hundreds of examples could be given of how man has added to and subtracted from what God has said, and all of them prove that men are not listening to God. When will modern men learn that our additions to and subtractions from His Word are all our own creations, and are therefore no better than the idols carved by the ancient pagans? These inventions will not bring us closer to God; they will only serve to separate us further.

Indeed, God "is in His holy temple." And if we would be wise creatures, we had better be quiet and listen to Him. We are His creation; therefore "let all the earth be silent before Him"

Why Do I Believe a Lie?

Dennis Allan

Religious confusion and its assorted contradictory doctrines proves that the devil and his servants are effective deceivers (John 8:44). Since God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), the many false doctrines taught in various

denominations today do not come from God. It is no surprise that the same evil one who has been perverting and denying the words of God since the Garden of Eden is still sowing seeds of deception. He even finds pastors ready to serve as his accomplices in preying upon little lambs (Acts 20:28-30).

But why would anyone allow himself to be deceived? Paul offers an explanation of the motives for believing lies in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. The people deceived by Satan's craftiness "did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." It is not sufficient to know the truth. We must love the truth. There are many people who study the Bible for curiosity, or vanity, or for academic reasons, but who do not approach the Scriptures with the humility necessary to allow the Lord to change them and mold their character. They don't love the truth, and are thus easy prey for the devil.

Paul mentions one other factor: they "had pleasure in unrighteousness." When a person wants to find an excuse to justify sin in his life, he will not study the Bible with the honest and open heart necessary to understand it. You can often hear this attitude in the comments of those who want to defend their sinful practices: "Where in the Bible does it say I cannot...?" The proper attitude is not defensive of evil, but asks: "What does the Lord want me to do?" People who are determined to justify their sins will not understand the truth. Their minds are carnal and incapable of discerning the spiritual richness of God's message (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Why would anyone believe a lie? Because the truth often demands painful transformations that most people are unwilling to make. The way of the Lord is difficult and lonely, but it leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-4).

Should We Be "Tolerant?"

Greg Gwin

Many people have the opinion that we all should be "tolerant" of the religious views of everyone else. In fact, about the only thing that receives much criticism these days is the "intolerance" of some of us who argue against certain religious beliefs. We're frequently viewed as being "fanatics," and mean-spirited "bigots." They tell us to be less judgmental and learn to accept all forms of religious expression as being equally good and beneficial.

All of this stems from an apparent failure to distinguish between different forms of "tolerance." There are at least three kinds:

- *Legal tolerance*: This is the recognition that everyone has a legal right to believe and practice whatever he or she feels is best and right.

- *Social tolerance*: This is the notion that everyone ought to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their particular religious convictions.

- *Uncritical tolerance*: The idea that no one ought to ever make a judgment relative to what others believe religiously. It suggests that it is not possible to determine what is right or true, and that all religious beliefs and practices are equally good.

We agree that all Christians are obligated by the Word of God to honor the first two forms of "tolerance." We would fiercely defend the legal right of every person to make their own decisions in matters of religion. Furthermore, we understand that the Lord has taught us to treat everyone with honor and dignity (1 Peter 2:17). To do otherwise would put us in direct violation of His will.

It is the idea of "uncritical tolerance" that is not found in the Scriptures. Instead, we are commanded to compare what people teach and believe with what the Bible says (1 John 4:1,2; Galatians 1:8,9; Matthew 7:15-20). We are to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). In this regard, there is no room for tolerance -- we must be faithful to God and His word (2 John 9-11).