

When Silence Isn't Golden

We spend the first year trying to get the baby to talk; then we spend the next seventeen years trying to get him to be quiet!

There is a time to be silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Even Jesus was silent when the occasion called for it (Matthew 26:63).

But silence isn't always golden. Sometimes it's counterproductive or downright sinful. When David had sinned, his guilt ate him alive as long as he kept it bottled up inside. *"When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long"* (Psalm 32:3). Only when he confessed to God did he find pardon and relief.

When you have information that can help other people, remaining silent about it would be sinful! For example, when Syria besieged Jerusalem, a terrible famine resulted. The Lord caused the Syrians to flee, leaving behind abundant food. The four lepers who discovered it knew they must tell others. *"This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we want until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household"* (2 Kings 7:9).

If remaining silent in that day of good news would have been sinful, how much more if Christians stay quiet about the gospel of Christ? Paul had suffered terrible abuse for evangelizing virtually everywhere he went. Still, he came to Corinth and led many to Christ. The Lord told him, *"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city"* (Acts 18:9-10).

Speak to the Lord about your burden of sin! Speak to other people about the Gospel! Silence isn't golden!

The "I Musts" of Jesus

I once heard a preacher make light of his fellow preachers for tossing around words like "must" and "have to." I didn't agree with him, for the Bible clearly uses such words. But the longer his barb has hung in my mind, the more I think I understand what he meant. We do toss those words around a little too lightly. They are designed to be heavy words.

The word "must" first appears in the New Testament in Matthew 16:21 as Jesus began warning the disciples of His impending crucifixion.

In Luke 4:43 Jesus issues the "must" of responsibility: *"I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."*

Luke also records for us a transaction that lets us know that sometimes the needs of others came into His scope: *"When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house'"* (Luke 19:5).

On two occasions Jesus shows us the importance of obedience to the scriptures with the "musts" that He issues (Luke 22:37; 24:44).

And the words of necessity are clear from the lips of the Lord when it comes to worshiping His Father (John 4:24).

In John 9:4 Jesus teaches says: *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work."*

Of course we know that the greatest question ever asked involves a "must": *"What must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30). But even after that question has been answered and followed correctly, there are still some "musts" for the Christian.

For a culture that prides its postmodern self in not accepting being "told" what it has to do, there are "musts" for any person who would be a follower of Christ. Among those musts clearly pointed out by Christ are: denying self and taking up one's cross (Luke 4:43), inconveniencing ourselves to meet the needs of others (Luke 19:5), and being involved in the work of God (John 9:4-5).

I didn't ask it lightly: What must you do?

--Dale Jenkins (via *Bulletin Gold*)

WHAT IS IT WORTH TO YOU?

A man in a fancy restaurant started to choke on a bone. A doctor rushed over, identified himself as a doctor, and reassured the man that he was going to be all right. He performed the Heimlich maneuver and the bone popped out.

As the man's breath and voice returned, he said, "I'm ever so grateful, doctor; how can I ever repay you?" The doctor smiled and said, "I'll settle for one-tenth of what you were willing to pay while you were choking."

It's true, isn't it, that when you're facing a crisis (especially a life-threatening crisis), you would give everything you have to get through it. Money is no object!

We do the same thing on a spiritual level. How many times have you faced hardship and prayed, "Lord, if you'll just see me through this, I'll serve you faithfully the rest of my life!" or something similar? But what happens when the crisis passes? Those feelings of urgency about serving God pass as well. If we could commit ourselves to doing one-tenth of what we're willing to do in those moments, most of us would ascend to a new level of commitment.

Paul wrote, *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21)

--Alan Smith (via *Bulletin Gold*)