

God Has Spoken

Tract Series

THE BIBLE WAY

Encouraging those of us with the common cause of Christ to speak with a common voice, some have called upon religious people to “speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” While not found in the Bible verbatim, this plea is the very heart of the reason the Bible was given to us in the first place.

To the church in Corinth Paul wrote, “we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (I Corinthians 2:13). The Bible originated in the mind of God and was given to the world (Jude 3) through strictly-guided men (II Peter 1:21).

The apostle also wrote that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable ... that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible came from God for the purpose of equipping man for doctrine and practice. What our Creator wants us to believe, teach and do, He has written. By His words God will judge every soul (Revelation 20:12) through Jesus, “the man whom He has ordained” (Acts 17:30-31).

Why would God have men write in His name regarding Jesus, “hear Him” (Matthew 17:5), and specify “teach and exhort these things” (I Timothy 6:15), if He is content to let man devise his own doctrine and practice? Let every sincere seeker of Heaven “speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.”

If we “speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent,” will we have to make any changes in our beliefs

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds
(Hebrews 1:1-2).

or behavior? That depends upon what we currently believe and practice.

If we are “rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15) we will not follow in worship today the rules given to the Jews for their worship. We will not go to the Temple in Jerusalem to make animal sacrifices and ceremonial washings. We will not blow trumpets, wear special clothing, or burn candles. The Bible is silent concerning these things in the worship of the New Testament church. Those who added Old Testament rules to the New Testament faith were rebuked by the apostles (Acts 15:24), reasoning that God had said nothing about such additions (verses 8-9). Don’t make rules out of God’s silence.

To **speak where the Bible speaks** is to teach that a person becomes a Christian only by following steps specifically prescribed by God. One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31; 8:24), repent from sins (Luke 13:3, 5), profess faith in Jesus as God’s Son (I Timothy 6:12; Acts 8:37) and be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

Among today’s people and churches there are many doctrines and practices which are not found authorized in the Bible (and some which the Bible even condemns). Can we really trust that God didn’t actually say what He meant and mean what He said? What does His Book say?

If we speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent we will do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. We won’t invent new work for the church, new ways to worship, or new names.

The apostles referred to the churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Thessalonica, etc. as “the churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16), because Christ built the church (Matthew 16:18), which is His “one body” (Ephesians 4:4-6), and He is the only Head of it (Ephesians 1:22-23) and determines alone who is a part of it (Acts 2:47). Names which honor doctrines, organizational systems or persons are not authorized by God, and should not be used (Galatians 1:6-12).

The God-given work of the church is the preaching of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:10). Modern so-called “social programs” may be a natural response to the gospel, but to make the church a social agency, rather than the world’s means to salvation of the soul, is not the will of God (I Thessalonians 1:5-10; Hebrews 5:12).

Worship is man’s adoration of God, and must be offered up in the means and manner that pleases and honors God (John 4:20-24; I John 5:14). The assembly ought never to be planned for man’s entertainment or conducted according to man’s preference (Matthew 15:9).

Call Bible things by Bible names, and Do Bible things in Bible ways.

Many of us have learned our faith under the teaching that the Bible is a record of God’s plan for people of the past, and that we are under obligation to learn how best to apply those principles in our modern world because God hasn’t given us specific instructions for this age. That’s a comforting doctrine for those who want to build their own churches, or for those who want to follow the easy route and keep the religion they have, but it simply is not the true nature of the Bible.

During the reign of king Manasseh, Israel ignored the word of God and invented their own religions. That was the sin for which God sent the Babylonians to defeat Israel, destroy Jerusalem and carry the people into captivity (Jeremiah 15:4). By the time Manasseh’s grandson, Josiah, became king the Law had been ignored for so long that it had been completely forgotten. When Josiah’s servants “found the book of the law in the house of the Lord” (II Chronicles 34:15), the new king ordered the people to give up their religions and simply follow what was written in the ancient book. God blessed Israel by delaying the promised punishment, and He blessed Josiah by protecting him from being part of that captivity (II Kings chapter 22).

Why can’t we today just return to the book God gave us, discarding all our creeds, catechisms, manuals and disciplines to let

God's word be our sufficient rule in all things (Acts 2:42)? We can if we want to.

Is the Bible alone a sufficient authority for the life of the church in this modern age? When Josiah restored right worship in the temple in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 34), he set an example that we should follow.

God's word was a pattern that Moses was told to follow (Exodus 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8). That principle applies also to God's plan for man's salvation today (Hebrews 8:5). The specific elements of the plan are a pattern that must be followed by every person who wants the same result (fellowship with God) received by those who heard and obeyed the apostles of Jesus in the first century of the church (Romans 6:1-17). There's only one plan from God, and it's a pattern for everyone. Today, different churches preach different plans of salvation, church organization, church work, etc. We can be stubbornly defensive, or we can take a closer look at the pattern and be willing to make whatever changes are required. Which attitude will allow us into Heaven?

Josiah's contemporaries thought they lived in a modern age and the law was for generations past. God's word is final: it was once given (Jude 3) to be ever afterward obeyed (John 14:15). God has spoken to us today in Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-2), but Jesus hasn't spoken in almost 2,000 years. What was spoken was written. What is written is final. It's a pattern and an example given by God. Return to the Book.

The Bible alone is a sufficient guide and authority in all religious questions, and you can understand it as such. The Bible is not the invention of man, but originated in the mind of God, who then told men exactly what to write (II Corinthians 2:11-13). The Bible was given by the same Power that created the mind of man, and was designed to be understood by that created mind (Ephesians 3:4).

We hear people acknowledging the divine source of the Bible, and then saying that we need the books and preaching of man to guide us today. They tell us we need the latest book by the popular author so we can understand something like God's grace, or God's will in worship. They say we need to let the church authorities tell us what is meant by the words we can read for ourselves in the pages of the Bible. They think you can't know what you're talking about if you don't have the right set of commentaries, or haven't been to the right seminars.

But He says that He didn't give His book to scholars, synods or self-righteous sectarians - He gave it to people! To all people. To every man and woman, young and old, rich and poor, scholarly and simple. You can understand the Bible. God made the Bible and your mind to be compatible (Hebrews 4:12). And He gave us the Bible to tell us where we came from (Genesis 1:26), why we're here (Ecclesiastes 12:13) and where we're going (Hebrews 9:27). Return to the Bible's instruction for life in Christ's church.

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