

GOD'S SILENCE IS NOT GOD'S APPROVAL



*“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”
-Genesis 2:15-17*

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” -Ecclesiastes 8:11

According to the Scriptures, lawlessness is a characteristic of the last days: I believe we live in such days. So, in an atmosphere where, as Jesus said, iniquity abounds, how are we to rise above the sin-excusing culture in which we live? Obviously, above all, our faith must be firmly fixed on Jesus and His finished work on Calvary. Likewise, we must rest in the Word of God while shunning the false notions, half-truths, and religious lies so popular today. The web of deception is far-reaching and pervasive, thus we must be ever mindful of the schemes of the enemy.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...

One of the most common traps Satan uses to lure men further into sin is by lulling them to sleep by a false tranquility and peace. How often have you heard compromisers piously proclaim, “Well, I don’t feel convicted and nothing terrible has happened to me..”? They falsely reason because they neither feel conviction nor suffer judgment, God must approve of their sin and disobedience. However, we must understand, God’s silence is not God’s approval. In this article, Lord willing, we will establish this absolute and expose the lie of the devil.

In the Genesis account of the fall, if we look carefully, our thought, “God’s silence is not His approval,” is clearly demonstrated/confirmed. I am going to give you a step by step commentary through our text to make this truth, “God's silence is not God's approval,” real to us. I must admit, I will take some speculative liberty to drive the point home, but I think my speculation will be fairly accurate.

First, we have the command...

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Notice, the command was given verbally, given once, and given to Adam personally. As far as we know, it was not yet preserved, written or otherwise, for further review, reference, or evaluation. There were no computer hard-drives, no CDs, or tapes, though I'm sure it was repeated. And yet, obviously, God expected Adam and his offspring to honor and keep it. No doubt, Adam taught this command to his wife. Perhaps, for caution sake, he added the emphasis, "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Also, remember, Eve did not receive the command by direct revelation, however, God expected her full compliance. And obviously, she knew the command and even quoted it to the serpent.

Genesis 3:2-3 ...we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And yet, the devil was able to bring God and His Word into question. Make no mistake, if the devil is to undermine our spirituality, he must convince us to entertain the question, "hath God said?"

Next, we have the temptation experience.

Genesis 3:6a And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise...

With the lies of the serpent weakening her resolve and desire pressing her to violate the command, Eve trembled with fear. She looked toward the center of the garden, admiring the beauty of the tree and its fruit. No doubt, she felt discomfort, but she was also curious.

She wondered, "Surely, God will strike me down instantly for such thoughts," but nothing happened. Slowly, she moved toward the tree in the distance, "I mustn't do this," she thought, but nothing happened. "Surely, the Lord will intervene, strike me dead or warn me in some way if I'm wrong," but nothing happened. When she realized nothing was happening, she broke into a confident stride toward the center of the garden, still, nothing happened. Cautiously she moved into the shadow of the tree, but

again, nothing happened. How beautiful it was; it's fruit laden branches swaying in the balmy winds. She walked around the tree slowly, and still, nothing happened. Nervously, she reached out very slowly, touching a leaf, then quickly drew her hand back again, nothing happened.

She began to be more confident as she lingered in the presence of the tree, "all of these things I've been told, they can't be true. I don't feel bad, I don't feel any different, I've even touched the tree, and nothing has happened." She decided to touch the fruit: cautiously, with her hand extended only inches away, she waited for a sign, but nothing happened. "Maybe God didn't mean what He said," she wondered. Suddenly, she tapped the fruit lightly with her fingers, stiffened, closed her eyes and waited for death to strike, but nothing happened. She waited for the thunder, a bolt of lightning, or for some manifestation of God's anger, but nothing happened. Again, her mind raced, "Maybe the serpent was right, could all these things I've believed be wrong?"

All these thoughts raced through her mind because nothing happened, but she failed to realize God's silence is not His approval.

The root problem was Eve disesteemed the Word of God.

Genesis 3:4-5 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

The lie of the enemy coupled with the experience of the temptation worked to undermine the fear of God. Back to our scene...

Eve was more relaxed now, standing under the forbidden tree. Her thoughts filled with question after question, "Why wasn't she dead?"

"Why did God forbid such goodly fruit (luscious, inviting)?"

"If this is wrong, why doesn't God tell me (He already had)?"

"Why don't I feel what I'm doing is wrong? Why don't I sense any conviction?"

"Did God really mean what He said?"

So it is with us, we make complex what God has made so simple. You see, Eve had the Word of God, she knew the commandment and that second-hand, verbal

commandment made her accountable. And so it is with us: we can't live by feelings, by experiences, by what the crowd is doing, but by the Word. Somewhere between here and the judgment bars of eternity God catches up with all rebellion. Just because nothing is happening, doesn't mean God approves. Just because "you are rich and increased with goods" and you can still speak in tongues, doesn't mean God endorses your choices. You may foolishly assume God's silence means He is being tolerant toward your pride and sin and love for the world. You may still have warm feelings when you worship/preach/witness. So you continue living in the flesh, refusing to repent and forsake your sin. Living under the deception you would lose your feelings if, in fact, God was displeased: but you do well to remember, God's silence is not His approval.

You see, when we look to experience, rather than God's Word, we succumb to deception.

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight...

Sadly, so many walk by sight, by feelings, by experience in the modern church. Emotions can be deceptive and feelings are fleeting. Just ask Isaac, or Samson, or the Laodiceans. We must always remember, God's silence is not God's Approval...

Psalms 50:21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

Let's continue our story: slowly Eve reached out again and this time grasped the fruit in her hand, but nothing happened. She held it for a moment, breathing deeply and nothing happened. In a sudden instant she jerked it from the branch, but nothing happened. She glanced up in the sky expectantly, she waited for fire and brimstone, but nothing happened. She drew the luscious fruit close to her face and breathed in it's pleasant aroma, nothing happened. It had such a pleasant smell, "It must be delicious," she thought and still nothing happened. She put the fruit to her mouth and touched it with her tongue and nothing happened. She broke the skin with her teeth to just have a hint of it's taste and nothing happened. It was delicious, so she decided to take just one, small bite. And It was like nothing she had tasted before, and yet, nothing happened. She started taking one bite after another, she pulled several of the fruit from the tree one after the other, amazingly nothing happened. Yes, the lie was told, the truth was sold, and sin would soon take it's awful toll.

Hebrews 3:12-14 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened

through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end...

Sin not only kills/damns, it's deceitful, it hardens, it curses the ability to discern and reason rightly. We dare not believe we are the exception: there is but a thin veil between being enlightened and being reprobate. Now watch closely, Eve becomes the first 'liberated Apostate'.

Genesis 3:6b ...she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

It can be confusing observing men who boldly violate the Bible, exhibit Positives: i.e. good feelings/works/void of conviction, etc.. We need to remember, God's silence is not God's approval.

So we re-visit our story: Eve ran as fast as she could to Adam with the good news. Excitedly she told him that she had eaten a delicious new fruit she found in the garden. Perhaps he asked her where the tree was in the garden, "It was the fruit of the forbidden tree."

No doubt, Adam reacted with horror. But before he could speak she quickly added, "and I didn't die as God said I would."

"In fact I feel great! I feel like I've been liberated!"

"The snake interpreted God's commandment for me. Adam, I am convinced we have been living under legalism all this time."

"We've been in bondage to a bunch of do's and don'ts."

"And, It can't be wrong, honey, because it feels so right."

She said all this, and still, nothing happened. Together they walked toward the tree with Eve doing all of the talking, and nothing happened. When they came close, Adam hesitated, but Eve arrogantly strode to the tree, jerked off a fruit and started eating, nothing happened. Then she plucked another off and offered it to Adam. He paused for a moment, then reasoned, "It must be alright, she seems to be so happy and liberated." By now Eve was oozing with confidence, smiling broadly at Adam, and strangely, nothing was happening. Eve went into a little Hebrew dance, spoke in

tongues, lifted her hands and shouted, and gave Adam a big Pentecostal kiss. At that point it didn't matter what God said, that was all he needed to be convinced that what she had was "of God."

So, he reached out and took the forbidden fruit in his hand and plunged his teeth into it and when he did, now something happened.

Their eyes were opened, they realized they were naked, and a strange feeling of shame fell over them. For the first time since their creation, they experienced the shame and guilt of nakedness, the glory of the Lord had departed. The glory that had clothed them was gone, something was happening to them.

Adam spit the fruit from his mouth, "We're naked," as they both began running toward a grove of trees nearby. As they worked feverishly to cover themselves, the sun was going down in the East and the bright orange sky was dimming. Shadows began stretching across the beautiful green carpets of Eden, they didn't realize it would be their last evening in paradise. Suddenly, they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Frantically they ran further into the thick of the trees and hid, something terrible was happening. Usually, when God called their names they were delighted, excited, expectant, and drawn, but now, at the sound of God's voice, they were gripped with horror, something they had never experienced before. Breathlessly they crouched in the bushes looking at each other paralyzed with fear.

Eve began to weep, something she'd never done before, "What has happened to us Adam? This is awful."

Adam's mouth was as dry as cotton, his hands trembled, and his voice broke with frantic emotion (all experiences utterly new)...

"I don't know what's happening, but we can't go into His presence like this! Something terrible has happening to us!"

A strange dark feeling they had never known began to grip them, their minds became confused, their thoughts muddled and mixed up. The beauty of paradise became dim; their desire to enter the Shekinah cloud and commune with God evaporated. Their communion with God forfeited, they were dead and didn't even know it. And as they watched the Shekinah cloud move across the meadow, Adam said, "Eve, this was the part the snake didn't tell you."

Finally, the application of the message is obvious.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Do not be fooled: God's silence is not God's approval.

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Eve held a dialogue with the snake and nothing happened. She allowed illicit desire to coexist with the Word in her heart and nothing happened. She disobeyed God with the commandment in her mouth, eating the forbidden fruit, and nothing happened. She enticed Adam to eat and nothing happened. She smugly ate the fruit and wiped her mouth and nothing happened. But when the presence of God moved in, she lost her smugness. All their justifications and reasoning evaporated instantly in His presence, that's when it happened. Indeed, judgment day, will be a horrible day for those who have compromised. All the good feelings of counterfeit freedom will turn to a choking wish for death when they enter into God's presence. There won't be any lengthy conversations, no long, drawn out opportunities for excuses and justifications, there will be no need. When God finally caught up with Adam and Eve, He basically asked one question...

Genesis 3:11 ...hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

So will it be with us on the day of judgment: we will have no excuses if we harbor unconfessed and unforsaken sin.

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