

## ASK THE PASTOR

# If faith cometh by hearing...what about God's silence?



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**O**n the seventeenth day of September of 1787, the Constitution of the United States was adopted. Soon after the government was formed, Alexander Hamilton, who had been appointed head of the Treasury Department, proposed that the government should establish a National Bank.

Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, now called the "Secretary of State," objected, and with this the first great fight in the new government began. Jefferson said, "The Constitution is the supreme law of the land; and while, indeed, it is not an infallible document, as is admitted by provision being made for its amendment, if we launch our ship of state on the Constitution we have adopted, we cannot establish a national bank, because there is no provision for it." Hamilton said, "There is nothing in the Constitution prohibiting the establishment of a national bank. The Constitution says not a single word about a national bank. There is not a single line in it that says: 'Thou shalt not have the government engaging in the banking business.'"

These two ideas laid the foundation for the first two great political parties in this country, known as the Federalists and Antifederalists. Hamilton's party, the Federalists, came to be known as "Loose Constructionists;" that is, to construe loosely the Constitution, on the grounds that we are at liberty to do anything that is does not specifically prohibited. Jefferson's party, the Antifederalists, was known as "Strict Constructionists;" that is, we must be governed strictly by what's written. At first, Mr. Hamilton's idea prevailed and John Adams, who was a Federalist, was elected as the second President. However, Jefferson, the Antifederalist, continued to preach the doctrine of respect for the Constitution, and later, he was elected the third President.

The problem then regarding how the Constitution was to be viewed is the same problem which exists today regarding the Bible. This is the very heart of the matter regarding the differences between religious people today. It is one of the main reasons why religious division exists. Shall we be "strict constructionists," holding only to what's written, or will we be "loose con-

structionists," at liberty to do anything not mentioned?

### **Bible Authority: Does silence authorize or prohibit?**

Two prominent reformers of the 15th century, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, disagreed on this very issue! Both had a similar plea, on the surface, regarding Bible authority. They both realized that in order for biblical truth to prevail and all the man-made doctrines be removed, they had to present the need of Bible authority in a practical manner. Martin Luther taught that any religious activity is permissible unless God has specifically forbidden it in the Bible. On the other hand, Ulrich Zwingli contended that a Christian may not participate in any religious act unless the Bible positively authorized it. Luther and Zwingli could not consistently agree on a number of biblical issues. For instance, Luther could justify baptism for infants, while Zwingli condemned the practice. Using Luther's logic, infant baptism is not even mentioned in the scriptures; hence, infant baptism is permissible. According to Zwingli's rational, since the scriptures do not positively authorize infant baptism, it is condemned.

### **What does the Bible say: Does silence authorize or prohibit?**

Consider how the Hebrew writer approached this issue. Hebrews 7:14 - "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Since Moses spoke nothing concerning anyone from the tribe of Judah being a priest, could Jesus have been a priest under the Levitical system? But Jesus is a High Priest now (Heb. 4:14-15). How can this be? The Law of Moses only authorized priests who were of the tribe of Levi (Num. 18:23). Years later, when Jeroboam sought to take control of the kingdom, he ordained priests who were not from the tribe of Judah (1 Kings 12:31; 2 Chronicles 11:14-15). Jesus could not be a priest under the Law of Moses, because He was from the tribe of Judah, "... which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Heb. 7:14. The Hebrew writer doesn't argue that God forbid Judah (even though he had), but rather stated that God spoke nothing about Judah being priests. What does this say of silence? Does it authorize or prohibit? Since Jesus is a high priest now, we are told in regard to the Law of Moses, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). What "law" or "covenant" is now in effect? We are told in Heb. 9:11-17, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building..."

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve

the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." When Jesus Christ became priest, there was a change in the Law. There was a new 'will' or 'covenant' that went into effect and replaced the existing covenant, the Law of Moses. This new 'covenant' or 'will' is the gospel. That is why the gospel is now said to be "God's power unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). It is found in the New Testament. Unlike the Constitution adopted by our forefathers, the New Testament is not subject to amendment. No general assembly, convention, conference, or delegation of people has the right to make amendments or resolutions regarding the Lord's Constitution. Thus, the vital question is: "Shall we accept the New Testament as God's constitution and be guided solely and entirely by it, or shall we assume the liberty to do anything not specifically mentioned in it?" The answer is obvious.

### **What about faith; Does it come from God's Silence?**

Consider two examples: A. Heb. 11:4 - Abel offered his animal sacrifice "by faith." To do something "by faith" is to do so in accordance with God's instructions. If there is no word from God, (no instructions), then whatever is done cannot be done by faith, for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) In order for something to be 'by faith', there has to be direction/instruction from God. Was Cain's "fruit of the ground" offering "by faith"? If so, then why was it rejected? We read in Genesis 4:5-7a, "... but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" B. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, were priests under the Law of Moses. We read of their death in Leviticus 10:1-2, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Notice, they offered "strange fire... which he commanded them not." They were to get the fire from the altar (Lev. 16:12, 13; Num. 16:46).

We must respect what God has said, if we wish to be pleasing to Him. God's power to save is taught in the gospel message (Rom. 1:16-17). We are not to delete, add to, or make alterations to it in any way (Rev. 22:18-19). And if God has not spoken, we have no right to presume that He will be pleased with what we do in worship. Presumption is a sin (Psa. 19:13).

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<b>SERVICE SCHEDULE</b>	Sunday -	<i>Discipleship</i>	9:45 a.m.
		<i>Morning Worship</i>	10:45 a.m.
		<i>Wednesday Night Celebration</i>	7:00 p.m.