

Let the Prudent Keep Silent

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

SILENCE IS GOLDEN TO GOD

Chapter 2 13

GOD GIVES THE ANSWERS WE NEED

Chapter 3 22

THE RIGHT TIME TO SPEAK

CONCLUSION 25

INTRODUCTION

Talk, talk, talk, talk.

We live in the so-called information age. It seems as though everyone and his brother has a “talk” show on television or radio. Go onto the computer and you can chat away, all day and all night.

All of this talk and chatter has overwhelmed our society, and it has affected the church, often negatively. Christians go to meeting after meeting to discuss this program and that program, for this group and for that group. Yet, discussion settles so little, tending more to create confusion and to cloud our vision of what is really important in these days.

We live in an evil time. Satan is really at work to distort the Gospel message and to hinder the work of bona fide Bible-based ministries.

In this booklet (taken from a message and a rap session between Pastor Stevens and Pastor Tom Schaller during a recent International Con-

vention), you will see why, in an evil time, it is so important for Christians to refuse to stir up issues. Our prayer is that these thoughts will help each reader to learn silent prudence so that we will see that behind every silent thought of God is the highest possible process of thinking.

Chapter One
SILENCE IS GOLDEN TO GOD

“And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

“But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

“But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

“Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

“But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.

“And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole

from that very hour" (Matthew 15:22-28).

"Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time" (Amos 5:13).

Why is it important to be silent in evil times? Without the mind of God, we are not able to understand the depth of an evil period when it comes upon us, so God is saying, "Step out of the way. You need to be silent now."

The first thing "prudence" speaks of is wisdom from above (James 3:17). It is inspired by God as a manifestation against Satan's government and his policy of evil. Evil is the administration of Satan's government. It is sin but it is beyond personal sin.

In churches today, there are people who slip in and out of divorce without blinking an eye. There is an evil time in their marriage, but they don't know how to handle the evil. They are not aware that they are not up against personal sin. Rather, they are contending with a supernatural government. Satan's policy is evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3).

Prayer will never get you out of evil. It is going to take deliverance through a maximum intake of doctrine to get a person out of evil.

A person can go to the Cross from now to eternity and it will not remove him from the ef-

fects of evil. The only thing that will take care of evil is receiving the Word of God in stillness.

Quickening Comes by the Word

Consider some of these verses in Psalm 119:

“Quicken thou me, Lord. Deliver me according to thy word,” (154, 156)

“Lord, I’m cleaving to the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word” (verse 25).

“Mine eyes behold vanity; quicken thou me in the way,” (verse 37, speaking of the perfect protocol of God).

“Quicken thou me in thy lovingkindness” (verse 40).

Notice the emphasis through repetition: “Quicken thou me....” “Quicken thou me....” “Quicken thou me....”

The fact that I was quickened yesterday has nothing to do with my need today. This morning I must be quickened. Tonight I must be quickened. And tomorrow morning I must be quickened. Furthermore, it must be exactly according to God’s Word.

The most beautiful thing in the world is when God’s people understand that a prudent person will be silent.

“What do you think?”

Stop! Don't be so quick to answer that question when it is posed to you. You could destroy yourself and the person who asked you. Let God do the thinking on this one.

Be Connected to the Head

Colossians 2:19 speaks about the Head, Jesus Christ. I will not have Body life beyond the measure that I am submitting to the authority of the Head. Inasmuch as Christ is my Head, if I submit to the authority of the Head, I will have God's life in my body. More than that, I will participate in giving life to the Body of Christ. I will be a life giver year after year if I am submitting to the Head. Disconnect me from the Head, and natural strength takes over. When that happens, the Cross does not have a way to eliminate what is going on. As a result, I have no life.

Everything about the Body of Christ is about giving life, and this life builds and revives and restores and quickens and makes new our thoughts and motives. We accentuate the positive.

The most amazing thing is to be properly related to the Head. We can have the best marriage in town, and if our family gets to know the Head, nobody can touch it. The family members

will reveal His life wherever they are. It is all about having a life that builds. And with this process, there may be a whole lot of silence.

When we focus, we begin to realize something tremendous: Bible precepts. We long for His precepts. We seek after lovingkindness. We seek after righteousness. We want everything to be according to His Word. In all of these verses and their renderings, the application that comes springing out of an individual is the tremendous life of the Head.

God gives comfort in affliction (Psalm 119:50). He says, "Listen, if you get under the authority of the Head, you will have authority in your Body life that is spiritually perfected."

Dangerous Misconceptions

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

The Bible says that they see good and call it evil, or they call evil good. Satan is always inventing evil things, and he throws in some "all right" things to seduce people who are deceived. We must study what the Word of God says about demons. We must study sermons on

the doctrine of demons* and realize that we are not immune to them, no matter how good we may be. You and I are just as subject to demons as anybody else.

Check your conversation. Check the preparation of your soul each day so your tongue doesn't get ahead of your mind. We must never let Satan get away with deception to control our lives with his government.

**Grace Publications' Doctrine Weekly has reproduced several of Pastor Stevens' messages about Satan's governmental system of evil, including Dealing Precisely with Demons (1998), Imaginations of the Heart (1998), Why Did God Create Satan? (2000), Satan's Limitations (2002).*

Chapter Two

GOD GIVES THE ANSWERS WE NEED

In Matthew 15:23, the Syrophenician woman talked to God and begged Him to say something, but He didn't open His mouth. What was He doing with her? He was answering with silence.

Has He ever done that with you? Has He ever answered you with silence? But isn't He alive and motivated and eager to help us out? He is, but His silence brings us to a higher thought life than when He speaks, and this is why: Eternity is behind His silence, and having to express His full thought with our vocabulary, He is often limited. But in His silence, He is able to work out the thing so you can see Him work through your faith, resting in His precepts and your love for them.

It really is wisdom to be silent. Who are we to be involved in the work of God? Just get out

of the way and be silent. Be still, and let God be God. A young pastor told me how that often, in the presence of evil, the temptation is to speak out; but when he waits upon God, his response is silence.

This is indeed a very good response, because when Satan is in phase one of evil, he tries to engage us in hand-to-hand combat with his kingdom, his government, and his supernatural resources. As a result, he can easily confuse us and deceive us. Through the projection of emotional stimuli, he tries to make us think that it is God when it is really him. And so the Lord says, "It is very prudent for you to stay silent, especially in a time of evil."

In an evil time, many of the words that people use in their communication (talking, defense; dialogue, offense) are dogmatically unwise. First of all, they don't know who they are fighting, and when they don't know who they are fighting, they try desperately to defend themselves. The problem is, they have no idea what they are defending themselves against. But, when we enter into a special kind of prudence, we are silent because we enter into a high level of thinking, which is actually thinking with God.

When a man enters into silence because of

high thinking, God has the opportunity to begin to get in and talk to him, teach him, show him, and most of all give him wisdom from above.

Wisdom from Above

A wise man in the world knows what to say, when to say it, who to say it to, and how to say it. This gives him an advantage over his competition. As God's people, receiving wisdom that comes from above is the only possible way we can have an advantage over evil. Evil is absolutely bound by the man who knows what to say, when to say it, where to say it, and how to say it. A man who is led by the Spirit is able to remain absolutely quiet and totally confident. God will say to him, "Now I am going to give you words of wisdom, and you just repeat it." So he repeats the wisdom that God gives him, and this becomes more than a match for anything that comes from the supernatural offender, Satan.

When a man is prudent, he is silent, and he receives four steps, four directions of applying wisdom from God: what, when, where, and how to speak. Because it is God's wisdom, he doesn't say anything that makes him have to apologize later. He doesn't get angry at people who refuse

to agree with him. He is just quietly confident, and he finds new resting places (Isaiah 32:17-18). That is a fantastic lesson of wisdom.

One desire for our church, for the people who work for us on these grounds, and for pastors throughout the land is that we would all receive a gift of wisdom. That is the greatest need in the church today. Jesus told His disciples to pray, "Deliver us from evil." He said, "Pray that, because you will need to be delivered from evil, so that is what you had better pray for."

People come up with so many opinions that are not accurate. Put it all together and you will discover in the end that silence is the greatest weapon the Christian has for a Spirit-filled offensive.

The woman in Matthew 15:22-23 was praying for her daughter who was grievously vexed of the devil, but Jesus "answered her not a word." Why? He was teaching her a lesson, and He was teaching His disciples a lesson. He was testing everybody's faith in His decision to answer the woman with silence. In the end, we know that He healed her daughter and then praised her up for her faith.

But first, He was silent.

Living by Faith in Love

Think about it this way also. How silent is God? He has given us His Word, and in it He has told us the most important things. But many times in our daily walk with Him, He doesn't say anything to us. He is keeping silent in an evil time.

In other words, maybe it is good when we don't know everything about a matter. If He told us more than we need to know, it could confuse us and trouble us. God's silence is a blessing for us, because it requires us to live in love. According to 1 Corinthians 13:7, love believes all things that have been told to us. We don't need to scrutinize people or their motives, we only need to trust God to lead us. What's more, love bears all things, endures all things, and hopes all things. Love is able to live in faith and believe that God has the best for us.

So what about us? Do we need an answer in every trial? Should we talk about everything and fill the void with words? In Job 23:4-5, Job said to his accusers, "I wish I could stand before God. I would fill my mouth with arguments." We certainly would have a lot to say if we could stand before God. But God is silent in an evil

time. He has told us what we need to know.

At the Last Supper, in John 14:30, Jesus told the disciples, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world cometh." As soon as He was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to the Pharisees, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53b).

What Jesus had told the disciples up to that point was enough. They knew enough to be able to go through the trial that was coming. We believe that about our ministry, too. We believe that we have learned enough over the years to go through everything that the devil may throw at us and that God may allow.

We have walked out of the Bible school classroom in awe and said, "I can't believe God brought me here. And what I have heard! If I hear no more, what I have heard is awesome."

God is silent, but He has told us what we need to know with each other. We should be people of few words, people who are swift to hear, slow to speak.

Beginning in Job 38, at the end of Job's trial, God confronted him and said, "Answer me, Job! Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" God proceeded to ask him nearly

eighty questions, and that put Job in his place. Job saw just how small he was in the grand scheme of things.

“Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

“Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth” (Job 40:3-4).

Recognizing Our Smallness

Theodore Roosevelt, before he became President of the United States, fell in love with a woman, and he married her. But while having their first child, she died, and it crushed him.

Though a young man, he was a gifted politician in New York, but the tragedy devastated him. So he decided he would go out to the Dakotas and be a cowboy. For two years he was out there in the wilderness. He would lie down on the ground at night and look up at the sky. He said, “I would look at the stars until I became very small.”

Years later, after he became President of the United States, he would do the same thing. When he could have been tempted by the power of his office, he would look up at the stars until he realized how small he was.

A lot of our words come out of ourselves, and maybe it is better, as Job said, to “put my

hand on my mouth.” After God was done talking to him, Job repented.

We are called to worship God, to walk by faith in Him, to love Him. And if He doesn’t talk to us, that is okay.

Ruth said to her mother-in-law, “I will follow you wherever you go” (see Ruth 1:16). So, when Naomi turned to go back to Bethlehem, Ruth followed her in silence.

A disciple must learn to follow God in silence. The prudent—the wise disciple—will be silent in an evil time, knowing that God will be silent with us because He wants to teach us how to live with love in an evil time.

Search Out the Right Things

The greater and higher form of silence by God produces and promotes a greater quality of faith in searching Him out. In other words, God is saying: “If you don’t know what I am saying, if you don’t hear me, establish your heart in the quality of faith that will discover what I am going to say and what I want, without evidence.

Sometimes we do a lot of talking about a matter such as tithing, but we don’t tithe. God instructs us with His silence. “Prove Me. Prove Me with your tithing. Prove Me. Put in your

money. There is no need to talk about it. I told you to do it. So do it. Case closed. No discussion. Prove Me.”

“It is to the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2).

This is an awesome proverb. One matter you cover. The other you investigate and you search out.

When we walk with God, we search out the things of God, but we cover something else—perhaps the guilty party, or the offense itself. But the flesh, the natural man, has it backwards. When we operate in the flesh, we cover what we should look for and reveal what should be hidden.

Please understand. The issue is not necessarily that we should not talk about people. God says that when it comes to the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil, we should not even speak about those things. In sowing to the flesh, we find that too often we cover over the things of God while we talk about the things of the flesh. But if you talk to a spiritual man, he will cover the things of the flesh, and he will reveal the glory of God.

Chapter Three

THE RIGHT TIME TO SPEAK

The Gospel is what we need to be able to speak to people in these evil times. No analysis of situations, no criticism of people and their positions. We just need to preach the Gospel to the lost. On this, we cannot be silent. In these cases, it is prudent for us to speak.

Up in Milton Plantation, Maine, we were knocking on doors on a Thursday afternoon, and we went to a farmer's house. This one said he wasn't ready to receive Christ. He was sending his children to our Sunday school, but we were compelled to communicate the Gospel to him. "You never know when God's going to take you," we said.

But he said, "I'm not ready." He said, "I appreciate what you're doing for my kids. But I'm not ready to accept Christ," and he made that dogmatically clear.

During our church service, we got word that

this man went to crank up his tractor, and in some way it fell upon his body and he died a short time later in the emergency room.

That Thursday afternoon may have been his last time ever to accept Christ. That is why we must be prudent and understand that there is a time to speak the truth in love.

Taking the Word to the World

Isn't it awesome when a person gets saved? Several of us were in Azerbaijan, and there was a Turkish man. By his appearance, he seemed so cold, so hard, and his face never changed, so we had no way to gauge the impact of our words. Six months later we saw him again. He had taken off, spiritually speaking. That man has a future in God. And he said some interesting things.

"In Turkey," he said, "there are people who are very social, and they are very hungry for love, but then they pull away from love that is expressed—especially the intensity of God's love. Of course they show love in the family and of course they are social, but they hurt so much that they pull away from it. They are being pulled in two directions. One is to love and the other is not to love, but to protect."

Boy, what an awesome thing it is when the

grace of God breaks through that wall and really gets a hold of someone's life!

So we speak—but not according to our own desire to be heard. We are prudent, silent in the storm, waiting upon God. We learn to be wise, to listen for God's direction, and then we speak the words that bring life to the soul who needs to hear from the Word of Life, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

God is moving quietly in parts of the world, and amazing things are happening. Here is an Iranian who met with some of our missionaries. He looked like someone who has been going to our Bible college. About thirty-something years old, a lawyer from Tehran, Iran, he was filled with the Holy Spirit—crystal clear. When he became a believer, the government fired him, and he went to Istanbul to find a new life. We know of six hundred Iranians who have gone to Istanbul because they have become Christians.

We saw a document from an official of an Islamic country, warning its leaders about the spreading of the Gospel. This memo speaks of “people in our country, rebellious against our government, who are turning to Christianity....”

This is such good news, isn't it? God is at work in the Islamic world. And this Iranian man said, “I lost my job. I am persecuted by the government, but I am so pleased! I am so thrilled

with Jesus Christ.”

To look at him, you would think there is no way that this man would have anything to do with us. We do not speak the same language. We are from totally different countries. But God and His Gospel are not cultural things. This is the Holy Spirit and the gift of salvation. And this is so refreshing, isn't it? Oh, it is beautiful.

The prudent man keeps silent when the enemy accuses. The prudent man will not hastily offer his opinions about anything. In fact, he will not say a word except the Holy Spirit gives Him utterance. Yet, how beautiful are the feet of him who brings the Good News (Isaiah 52:7). How excellent it is to carry the Word of God and the truth about the Finished Work of Jesus Christ to every corner of the world.