



“Speak Where the Bible Speaks and
Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent”

Alexander Campbell (1809)

The background of the slide is a dark, textured image of an open book. The pages are visible, showing some text, but it is mostly obscured by the dark overlay and the white text. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the edges of the pages and the spine of the book.

“Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent”

- Its original form: “Where scriptures are silent, we are silent.”
- This quote was spoken in 1809 by Alexander Campbell, one of the leaders of the Restoration Movement.
- A great principle of the restoration movement is the silence of scripture.
- Martin Luther insisted he could do anything the scriptures did not forbid. Ulrich Zwingli said he could only do what the scriptures authorized. They parted company because they could not agree.

Silence As A Rule Of Language

- When one matter is specified in a given category, all other options in that category are excluded
- When God told Naaman to dip in the Jordan River, Naaman understood it excluded all other rivers; his anger proves he understood.
- When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, He didn't list all of the places he could not go; Jonah understood, and his rebellion proves it

Silence As A Rule Of Language

- Bread and fruit of the vine specified excludes all other foods in the Lord's Supper.
- Immersion for baptism excludes sprinkling and pouring.
- The Lord specified vocal singing, excluding instruments.
- Prayer is specified in Jesus name, excluding prayer in another name

An open Bible is shown in the background, with its pages and cover visible. The text is overlaid on the image in white. The main title is in a large, bold font, and the list items are in a smaller font.

“Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent”

- The scriptures limit us to what God has specifically stated
 - Mark 16:15 - “And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”
 - 2Tim. 4:2 - “Preach the word!”
 - 2Tim. 2:2 - “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

“Speak Where the Bible Speaks and Be Silent Where the Bible Is Silent”

- The scriptures permit us liberty only where God has not been specific
- How we go is left up to us; what we teach is not
 - Matt 28:19-20 - “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”
- When and where we assemble is left up to local churches to decide, but the decision to assemble together is not left up to us
 - Heb. 10:25 - “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another...”

God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- How God wants humankind to respond to His love, blessings, and commands
 - Deut. 6:4-6 - “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”
 - Shamar - “diligently, carefully, scrupulously, utmost care” (JPL); Deut. 2:4, 4:15, 17:10, 24:8, 6:17, 12:19, 12:23, 4:39-40

God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- Jesus obeyed the rule of silence
 - John 4:34 - “Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”
 - John 5:19, 30, 36 - “Then Jesus answered and said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner... 30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me... 36 But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.”
 - John 6:38 - “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- John 7:16 - "Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me."
- John 8:26 - "I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him."
- John 12:49 - "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak."
- John 14:10 - "...The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works"
- John 16:12-13 - "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- God's Word mandates the rule of silence
 - Deut. 4:2 - "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
 - Deut. 12:8, 32 - "You shall not at all do as we are doing here today-every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes... 32 Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- Prov. 14:12 - “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”
- Prov. 30:5-6 - “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. 6 Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”
- Rev. 22:18-19 - “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

God Wants Us To Respect His Authority

- The early Christians of the second century understood the rule of silence
 - Didache 4:18 - “Thou shalt not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but thou shalt keep what thou did receive. Adding nothing to it and taking nothing away.” (aka The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)
 - Epistle of Barnabas 19:11 - “Thou shalt keep those things which thou hast received neither adding to them or taking away from them.”
 - Tertullian - “Any doctrine not as old as the apostles is thereby condemned by the silence of Holy Scripture.”

When People Act Without God's Authority

- Leviticus 8 & 9 records ten times that Aaron, Nadab and Abihu did just as the Lord commanded. Then the Sons of Aaron broke that pattern of obedience.
 - Lev. 1:7-8 - “The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. 8 Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar”

When People Act Without God's Authority

- Lev. 9:23-24 - "And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, 24 and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces."
- Lev. 10:1-3 - "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. 3 And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the LORD spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified."

When People Act Without God's Authority

- King Saul on his own initiative believed that because he was king he could offer a sacrifice at Gilgal
 - 1Sam. 10:8 - "You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do."
- He was told to wait; that excluded all other considerations or options

When People Act Without God's Authority

- 1Sam. 13:8-14 - "Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 9 So Saul said, Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me. And he offered the burnt offering. 10 Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. 11 And Samuel said, What have you done? And Saul said, When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, 12 then I said, The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD. Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering. 13 And Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

When People Act Without God's Authority

- King David presumed to adjust what God commanded regarding the transportation of the Ark of the Covenant
 - 1Chron. 13:9-10 - “And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. 10 Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God.”

When People Act Without God's Authority

- After consulting the Law, David understood no one was to carry the Ark but the Levites
 - 1Chron. 15:2, 12-15 - “Then David said, No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever... 12 He said to them, You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. 13 For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order. 14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 15 And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.”

God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- In the Old Testament
 - Jer. 6:16 - “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls...”
 - Jer. 23:16, 32-34 - “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD... 32 Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams, says the LORD, and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD. 33 So when these people or the prophet or the priest ask you, saying, What is the oracle of the LORD? you shall then say to them, What oracle? I will even forsake you, says the LORD. 34 And as for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, The oracle of the LORD! I will even punish that man and his house.”

God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- In the New Testament
 - Col. 2:20-23 - “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- 21 Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, 22 which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

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- 1Cor. 4:6 - "...That you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other."
- Acts 15:1-2, 24 - "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. 2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question... 24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, You must be circumcised and keep the law --to whom we gave no such commandment"

God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- Heb. 1:5 - “For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are My Son, Today I have begotten You? And again: I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”?”
- Heb. 7:14 - “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”

God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- It is about service to God by those He created; it is not about men serving themselves and expecting God to be pleased
 - Ex. 28:1 - “Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.”
 - 2John 9 - “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”

God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- God expects us to respect and obey His most recent command
 - Ex. 17:6 - “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”
 - Num. 20:8-12 - “Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals. 9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock? 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. 12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

God Has Always Made It Clear That His Word Is Binding

- God wants us to accept what He has had written without twisting it into what we want it to mean
 - 2Peter 3:15-16 - “And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”