

THE SILENCE OF CHRIST ... which preached to a world
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(MATTHEW 15:21-23)

"Never man spake like this man" was one of the most striking things ever uttered concerning Christ ; and the helplessness of the officers who were sent to arrest the Lord Jesus, ably endorsed their verdict. Words of profound wisdom fell from the Teacher's lips, and it was said that He spoke as one having authority and not as the scribes. Eloquence and wisdom, simplicity and profundity, clarity of thought, directness of approach, tenderness and fearlessness all combined to place Him in a class of His own. Yet in strange contrast was the astounding fact that sometimes His silence was more effective than His sermons. Often when circumstances demanded an oration, He calmly considered the matter and then refused to speak.

He was silent when we would expect Him to answer prayer "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." This action was apparently inexplicable, but it brought the very best out of the woman's soul. Her faith was tried, and ultimately she went away a better woman. If the Lord immediately and unconditionally answered every prayer, more harm than good would result. Sometimes He accomplishes most by refusing to grant our desires. (See Bible Cameos, p. 91.)

He was silent when we would expect Him to defend a woman
(John 8:6)

When the enemies of Christ brought to Him the woman taken in adultery, they said, " Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not And we know now that His silence delivered Him from a foul plot. (See Bible Cameos, p. 137.) Words spoken in haste are often repented at leisure, and very frequently it is the still tongue that makes a wise head. The Master's silence enabled Him to consider the grave issues at stake ; and when at length He answered His critics, His words exhibited great wisdom. His was the most eloquent silence ever known.

He was silent when we would expect Him to continue preaching (John 4:1-3)

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John . . . He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." There is reason to believe that this was one of the most suggestive of all His actions. When the blessing of God was falling in increasing measure, when people were responding to the call of the Gospel, when revival knocked at the door, He quietly withdrew from the scene and allowed John Baptist to continue the great work. He knew that the enemies were beginning to compare the two camps, and soon their evil tongues would be saying that rivalry existed between Christ and His forerunner. Before they had the chance to begin, the Lord graciously went to another district.

He was silent when we would expect Him to defend Himself

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(Matt. 27:12-14)

And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word-, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." (i) Christ was- careful not to make others sin. (ii) He was patient in bearing reproach. (iii) He was willing to endure all things-even a cross-if by so doing He could honor God and help His fellow men. What would we have done in similar circumstances? Pilate marvelled-and probably all heaven marvelled with him.

He was silent when facing a guilty soul (Luke 23: 8, 9)
" And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing." And thereby hangs a tale-a tale of tragedy and sin. God once declared: " My Spirit shall not always strive with man," and Herod provided the infamous example of this fact. He had murdered John Baptist, and had thereby sealed his destiny. Even the great lover of souls had no word of rebuke, of love, or even of advice. He let him die. " He answered him nothing," and that silence preached a sermon which still echoes around the world.

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