

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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An Exception to the Principle of Silence???

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We recognize from reading and studying the inspired Scriptures that God’s silence is not permissive. We cannot assume God authorizes something just because God is silent in condemning it. For example, we know Nadab and Abihu were suddenly struck dead when they offered up “*strange fire before Jehovah which He had not commanded*” (Leviticus 10: 1). God was silent regarding the fire burning the incense these two priests offered unto God in their censors. The fire was strange or profane because God had not commanded it. Either the burning sacrifice had not been commanded on this occasion, or the fire they placed in their censors had not come from the altar God had authorized (cf. Leviticus 16:12). Regardless, we know God had been silent regarding this sacrifice, therefore His silence was not permissive.

Some today question this principle regarding silence by presenting God’s teaching regarding oaths in Numbers 30:4. If a daughter has vowed with an oath while being in her father’s house, or being under his rule, and he hears the solemn vow, and “*...holds his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand.*” Some think this passage

demonstrates that silence is sometimes permissive in Scripture. Is it not true the father is silent regarding his daughter’s binding oath, and therefore her binding vow stands? Only when the father speaks to “*disallow...his daughter’s vow before God, will “Jehovah...forgive her, because her father disallowed her” (Numbers 30:5).*

Numbers 30 emphasizes the need for godly action of leadership in the home among husbands and fathers. A daughter may promise something, binding herself with an oath before God to fulfill. The father upon hearing it may realize it is rash or a foolish vow, and disallow such a promise before God. God will forgive her for such a binding vow, releasing her from her oath. The same is true regarding husbands upon hearing a “*rash utterance*” coming from his wife’s lips. He is to act “*the day*” he hears it and disallow it, making it void before God, and Jehovah will “*forgive her*” (Numbers 30:8). But if he hears it and “*holds his peace,*” the vow, though rash, shall stand against her if she does not fulfill it as promised before God (Numbers 30:6-7).

The action of husbands and fathers should also be *timely*. For example, if the husband hears his

wife’s vow and solemn oaths from “*day to day*” and keeps silent, these oaths, though rash, will “*be established,*” and must be fulfilled before God (Numbers 30:14). If he delays and later seeks to make his wife’s rash or unwise vows void with his verbal disapproval, “*then he shall bear her iniquity*” (Numbers 30:15). Because he kept silent and did not make his wife’s rash vows void when he heard them, they will stand according to law despite his present effort to make them void. Therefore, if she does not fulfill them, he will bear responsibility with her in her sin when she does not fulfill them.

We can take away from Numbers 30 the lesson that wise leadership in the home demands timely godly action, and at times must not delay. But do we see an exception to the principle that silence is permissive?

One could argue from Numbers 30 that we have here an exception to the Law regarding oaths. The rule is that all oaths uttered must be fulfilled (Ecclesiastes 5:4). But the silence of husbands and fathers is not permitting something from silence, but confirming something that already has been spoken. Numbers 30 is not an exception to God’s rule regarding His silence. God’s silence is still not permissive!