

Glad Tidings

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

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Silent Times

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There is “*a time to keep silence and a time to speak*,” Solomon tells us (*Ecclesiastes 3:7*). Much of our time is filled with speaking. Therefore, we should make sure when it is our time to speak that our words be appropriate and timely. A word of joy given as an answer: “...*how good it is*” (*Proverbs 15:23*). A word “*fitly spoken*” has a beauty “*like apples of gold in network of silver*” (*Proverbs 25:11*.) But how often do we think about the times we should be silent?

The times for silence in Scripture are not always the joyful and pleasant times we love. But they are instructional. Viewing the results of God’s judgment upon Jerusalem, God’s people are silenced. No more doubts about God’s warnings. No more declaring peace when there is no peace. Harsh reality is right before the eyes of the leaders. “The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, they keep silence”... (*Lamentations 2:10*). But bearing the yoke of God’s chastisement in silence is also good: “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silence, because he hath laid it upon him (*Lamentations 3:26-29*).

In silence, David felt the guilt of sin. “When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my

groaning all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was changed as with the drought of summer” (*Psalms 32:3-4*). No one else is to blame. I’m the one. I have sinned. God’s hand of righteousness weighs heavy upon the conscience and leads to the next step of confessing sins and through repentance, enjoying the blessings of God’s gracious forgiveness.

Silence is appropriate for those times of deep sorrow over one’s physical condition. While Job sits among the ashes feeling the pain of boils all over his body, his three friends sat down with him and “none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was great” (*Job 2:13*).

Looking upon the grieving face, we often feel the need to say something. It is too quiet. So, we break the silence with words which upon reflection create more confusion and often, increased sorrow. If Job’s friends were to respond with “all things work together for good” as some, by default, do today, they may have helped Job momentarily, but would have increased his uncertainty of God’ justice. What things? Are these boils of God? What “good” are they to me? Job’s friends did the appropriate thing: they sat with him, not leaving him

by himself in his grief. They kept quiet.

In silence, they sat by his side for seven days (*Job 2:13*). This may seem unnaturally lengthy, but hindsight reveals it was not long enough. For when they began to speak, their faulty reasoning was exposed, provoking Job to utter things that he did not understand (*Job 42:3*).

There is a practical side of silence. It is difficult to reflect on what is being said when we are talking. The multitude in Jerusalem did a wise thing after Peter emphasized salvation was by grace apart from the Law of Moses. They could have started talking over Peter, trying to refute his words, but they “kept silence.”

They did not miss Paul and Barnabas’ input of reflecting upon God’s miracles which confirmed Peter’s remarks (*Acts 15:12*). Being silent allows us to hear and reflect upon all that is being said. I wonder how much better understanding of issues might be accomplished if people on both sides of an issue would put into practice what we see in Acts 15?

There are times when silence is prudent. Are you wise as you live before God and with man ?