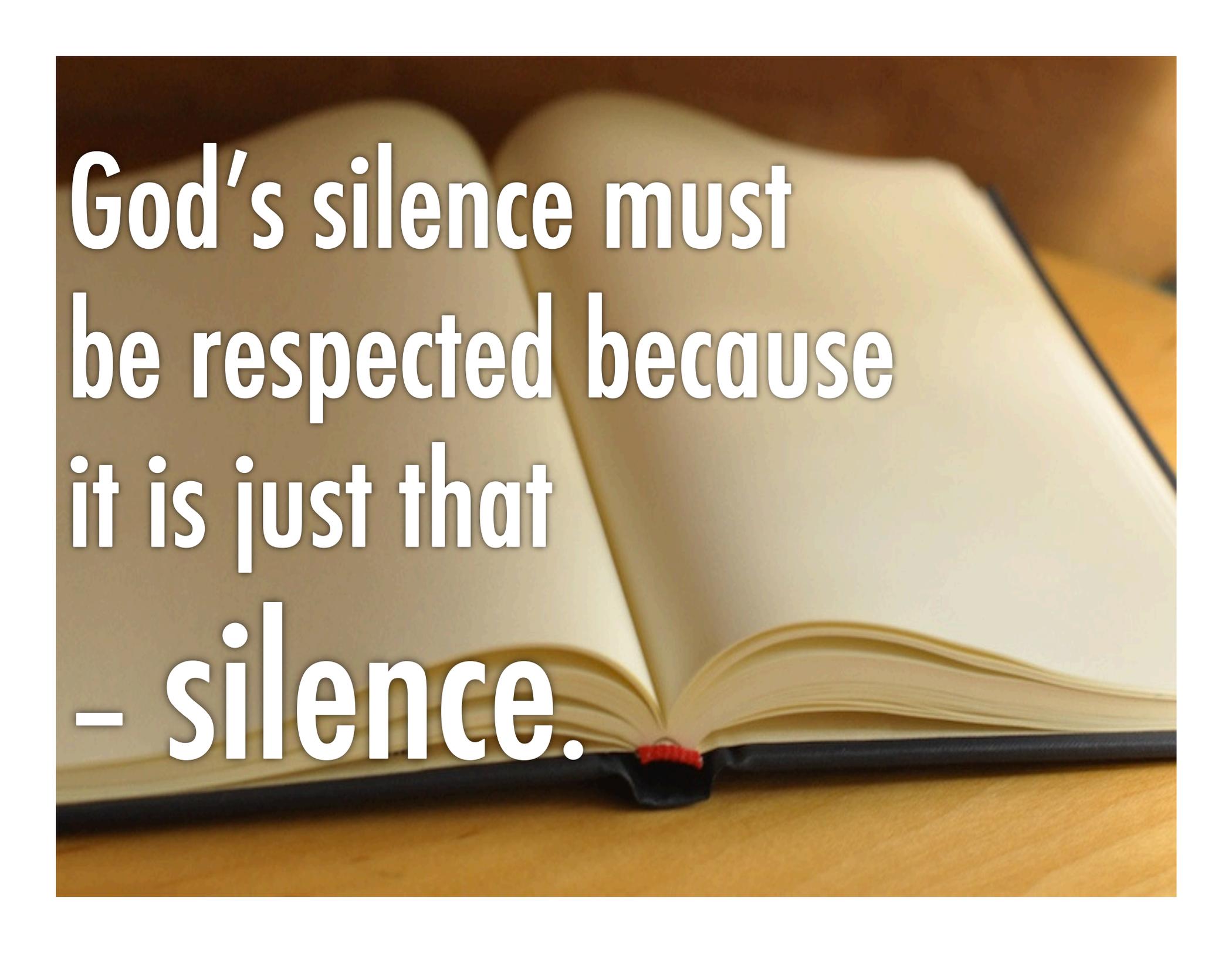
An open book with a red bookmark is lying on a wooden surface. The pages are slightly aged and yellowed. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

WHEN GOD SAYS

NOTHING

SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

- Opinions vary widely on the authority of silence in the Bible. Some assert that it is entirely permissive (“God never said I couldn’t do it”) while others insist that it is entirely restrictive (“Unless God expressly tells me to do it”). On many thorny subjects, I’ve found that either extreme can be damaging to the text and disastrous in practice.
- We must strive not to make silence some kind of doctrinal “catch-all” that allows us to justify, by purely human wisdom, any belief or practice we find convenient or appealing.



God's silence must
be respected because
it is just that
- silence.

RESPECT FOR SILENCE

- We expect that silence is respected in almost every area of life (ingredients lists, expiration dates, posted store hours, language of a warranty, civil laws, speed limits, etc.). What a rule or statute says is meant to exclude anything it does not say. Otherwise, there would be greater respect for omission than what is actually stated.
- Silence does not give consent (Acts 15:22-24).
- We all accept the idea that we do not need to ramble on and on about everything we do not want on a burger if we have stated what we do want or what the menu states is included already.



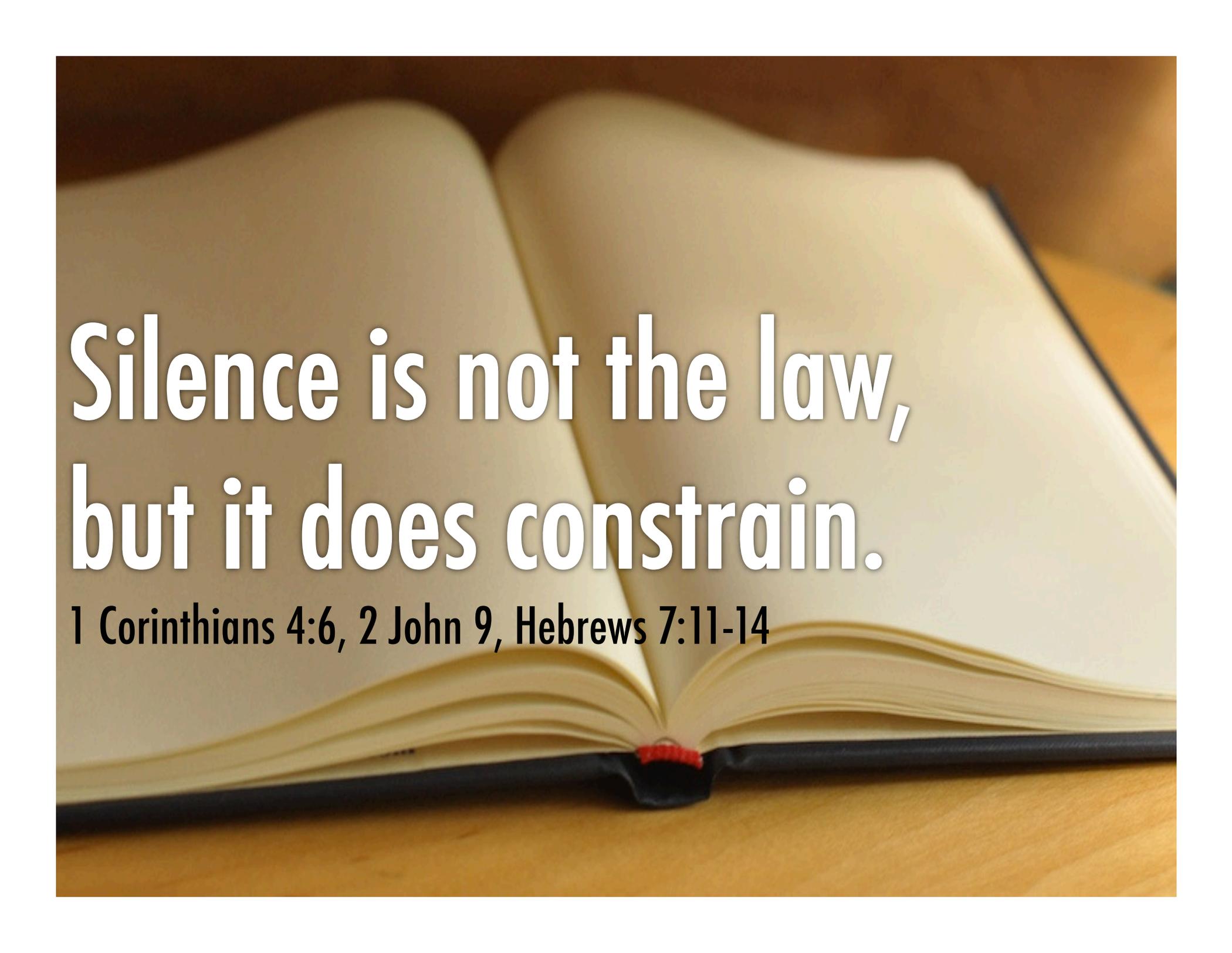
Genesis 6-7 – Noah was told to build an ark. He was given many details (material, dimensions, one door, one window). But God was silent about how Noah was to make it (tools, hired labor, size of the door and window, etc.).

WHAT DID SILENCE PERMIT?

- Noah was allowed, by God's silence, to use any tool that was suitable. He could invent new tools, adapt tools to that specific job, hire and fire laborers, or even work at any pace that would get the job done.
- What Noah could not do was alter God's specific plans. He could not build six windows, or make the ark half the size, or use any wood he wanted.
- The moment innovation fundamentally deviates from God's designated will, we have crossed the boundary and are in violation of His authority.

IT WORKS BOTH WAYS

- **Matthew 15:1-9** – God was totally silent regarding hand-washing as an act of worship. The Pharisees treaded upon that silence by imposing a standard of their own invention. Their manmade rules, justified because they thought they were protecting the Law, ended up contradicting and negating God's Law. They condemned others over issues about which God was silent.
- At the same time, they thought they could relax a standard because they had more regard for one of their innovations than for the real purpose of the Law.

An open book with a red bookmark, resting on a wooden surface. The pages are cream-colored and slightly aged. The book is open to two blank pages. The text is overlaid on the pages.

**Silence is not the law,
but it does constrain.**

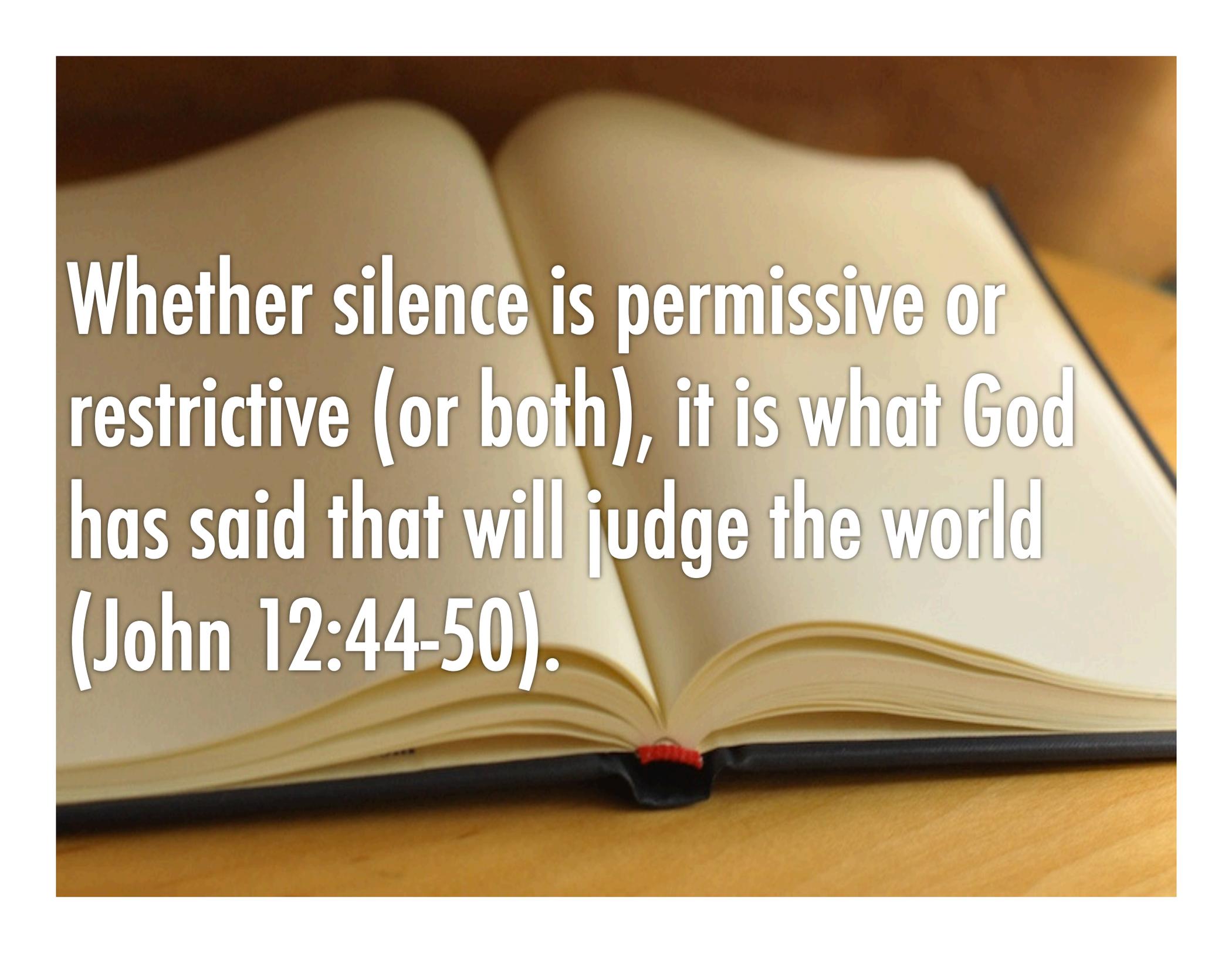
1 Corinthians 4:6, 2 John 9, Hebrews 7:11-14

THE LORD'S SUPPER

- 1 Corinthians 11:17ff – Paul explains that this was an instruction from the Lord. It was simple enough – unleavened bread, fruit of the vine, instituted with prayer. Yet there was also silence (what to wear, how to serve, what time of day). None of these considerations should have an effect on the experience of the believer who participates. But silence did not permit gluttony, or association with a common meal, or for the supper to be about eating and drinking for sustenance. Jesus was silent about drinking soda or coffee, or partaking of the bread as part of a sandwich.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Has God really been silent? Sometimes we convince ourselves that we are in the right because we do not like what God has already said (2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- “God never said we can’t have instrumental accompaniment”
– But He did say we must sing and make melody with our hearts (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16), which is limiting. Playing an instrument is fundamentally and functionally different from singing. In this case, the silence logically excludes instruments.
- “God never said we can use all of this technology, or even this building” – But those things do not interfere with God’s commands to worship or evangelize (Heb. 10:25, Matt. 28:18ff). God is silent, but not restrictive.

An open book with a red bookmark is lying on a wooden surface. The pages are cream-colored and slightly aged. The text is overlaid on the right page.

Whether silence is permissive or restrictive (or both), it is what God has said that will judge the world (John 12:44-50).