

Silence Is Golden

Proverbs 17:28

Charlie Brackett

The Swiss have a saying, "Speech is silvern, silence is golden." The Czechs say, "Mlúviti stříbro, mlčeti zlato!" In many languages there are proverbs to the effect that keeping silent is wise or, as we might say, "Silence is golden." The wisdom of Solomon expressed this thought particularly as it benefits a fool. Listen to Proverbs 17:28. "Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is counted prudent." An old Arabian proverb is far more blunt: "Silence is the covering of the stupid."

There certainly is wisdom in silence, not just for the foolish, but for all. It is easiest to talk. "Talking comes by nature, silence by understanding," says a German proverb. Talking does come naturally and easily, and requires little skill of language or depth of thought. Even one who is "golden mouthed" and "silver tongued" does well to know when and where to speak and when and where to keep silent. Solomon said in Proverbs 17:27, "He who restrains his words has knowledge." And what was it James said in chapter 1 verse 19? "...let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."

Someone has said, "Well timed silence has more eloquence than speech." Exercising restraint in speech is wise indeed. But the one who does not speak well or, because of his lack of knowledge or understanding, has nothing of importance to say, shows even greater wisdom when he remains silent. By keeping his silence, though he really is a fool, he demonstrates wisdom at least in that point. How can the one whom lacks understanding gain knowledge if he will not listen? Anxiety to talk is a mark of either a shallow mind or a proud spirit.

Even our Lord, who could in no way be classed a fool, was silent for thirty years and when he finally spoke, His words changed forever the course of history and the souls of men.