

The Word That Was Not Said

by J.R. Miller

The sermon calls for the recognition and expression of kind words that often remain unspoken, highlighting their profound impact on relationships and personal integrity.

Scripture: Psalm 19:14, Proverbs 12:18, Proverbs 15:23, Proverbs 16:24, Matthew 12:36-37, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13, James 4:17

Topics: "The Power of Words", "Encouragement and Affirmation"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of the words we fail to say, highlighting that many sins stem from inaction, particularly in our speech. He urges believers to confess the things left undone, especially the kind and encouraging words that could uplift others. Miller reflects on the pain caused by unspoken affirmations and the moral cowardice that prevents us from defending our loved ones or expressing our affection. He calls for a more open expression of love and appreciation, warning that withholding such words can lead to deep emotional wounds. Ultimately, he encourages us to cultivate a habit of speaking words of encouragement and love while we still have the chance.

Transcript

Many of the sins of most good people--are sins of 'not doing'. We need always to put into our prayer of penitence the confession, "We have left undone--those things which we ought to have done." This is true of our sins of speech. In one of the Psalms is a resolve that we all need to make, "I will take heed to my ways--that I sin not with my tongue." Some of us have a great deal of trouble with our tongues. We say many harsh words, perhaps bitter words which cut and sting! We may plead, as our defense of what we say--that the things we say of others are true. But we have no right to blurt out words that give pain to another, merely because they may happen to be true!

"The ill-timed truth we should have kept--

Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung!"

There is a great deal of sweet forgiveness in every true heart which has been filled with the love of Christ. The Master's emphatic lesson, that we should forgive, not seven times--but seventy-seven times, has been learned by many patient and gentle believers, for it must be confessed that in too many homes--there is almost measureless need for forgiveness. But is it not most unjust in anyone--to make such demands on love, to make life so hard--for one who has entrusted the heart to his keeping? Should

he blame anyone but himself--if some day he finds that he has wearied and worn out the love which has been so patient, so long-suffering, with him?

Forgive you--O, of course, dear,

A dozen times a week!

We women were created--

Forgiveness but to speak.

"You'd die before you'd hurt me!"

This I know tis true.

But it is not, O dearest,

The things you mean to do--

It's what you do, unthinking,

That makes the quick tear start;

The tear may be forgotten,

But the hurt stays in my heart!

And though I may forgive you

A dozen times a day,

Yet each forgiveness wears, dear--

A little love away!

And one day you'll be grieving,

And chiding me, no doubt,

Because so much forgiving--

Has worn my great love out!

But it is possible never to treat our friends unkindly in word or act--and yet to sin grievously against them. We sin against others continually, in restraining kindly speech, in withholding words which we ought to have spoken--cheerful, encouraging, helpful words.

We often think, after the opportunity has passed, of some strong, true word we might have spoken at a certain moment--but which we did not speak. Perhaps "we had not thought" to say it. With many of us the mind works slowly--and we do not think of the fine answer we could have given--or the wise word we might have uttered--until it is too late! Our best thoughts--are oftentimes after-thoughts, too late to be uttered, and avail us nothing. Or the good word may have been kept in the heart unspoken, through timidity or shyness. Bashfulness is sometimes a hinderer of usefulness. We want to speak--but we cannot conquer

our natural shyness--and so the kindly or cheering words we were eager to utter--lie unexpressed in our hearts, and our friend does not know that we wished to hearten or encourage or comfort him--in his time of trouble or suffering.

Or it may be lack of moral courage--which restrains speech, when we had the chance to say noble words for Christ. There is a great deal more evil wrought through moral cowardice--than most of us would care to admit. We are afraid of a sneer. We are not brave enough to stand alone.

We wrong our friends, too, most of us, at times, by not speaking courageously in their defense--when their character or conduct is unjustly assailed. Many of us have bitter thoughts of our own behavior, when we remember how we failed one we love in an hour when he needed us to stand up for him in his absence. The word we did not say--burns before our eyes in appalling characters, and shames us.

There is another large class of words unspoken which count seriously against us in life's records. These are words of kindly interest and affection, which it is in our heart to say--but which find no utterance in speech. Especially in home interactions, do such silences work hurt. Perhaps we are careful never to say a word that would cause pain--if we reach this self-restraint, we think that we have attained a high ideal of Christian living. But this is only negative. Not doing people harm--is not the same as doing them good. We sorely wrong our loved ones--by keeping back, by holding in our hearts, unspoken thoughts of love--which we ought to have uttered in their ears!

There is altogether too much reserve in many friendships. We are too watchful of words of commendation. It is a great thing to a child to get a word of praise for something that has been well done, some task given, some lesson set, some duty required, or even for a blundering effort that was the best the child could make. It is like a refreshing cordial to a weary one, toiling and struggling faithfully, though perhaps without the reward of apparent success--to have a word of appreciation and of good cheer spoken heartily and sincerely. It brightens all of one's day of task-work, and puts new courage into one's heart--if in the morning, thoughtful love speaks its gracious word of tenderness. Through all the hours--the light shines, and the song sings!

Yet too many of us seem not to think of this. We love the dear ones of our home--but somehow the love is congealed in our heart and we fail to get it thawed out, and so those whom we ought to help with their burdens, cares, trials and sorrows--go unhelped by us through long dreary days and months!

"Loving words will cost but little

Journeying up the hill of life;

But they make the weak and weary

Stronger, braver for the strife.

Do you count them only trifles--

What to earth are sun and rain

Never was a kind word wasted;

Never one was said in vain!"

It will do each of us good--to think seriously of our own particular habit in this regard. Do we sin against our loved ones--by keeping back the words of appreciation or commendation, and the expressions of affection, which continually press up to the very door of our lips for utterance, and yet are withheld? Are there hearts close to us, that are starving for their daily bread of love which we have to give, which it is our duty to give--but which we do not dispense?

Someone says, "Children do not dream of the fire under the snow, in the reticent nature of their parents." But is it not a grievous sin against children--for parents to allow the snow to cover up the fires in this way? Would it not be infinitely better--if the love found a language, if the parental pride, the enthusiasm, when beautiful things come out in the children's lives, the gladness when they do well--if these feelings and emotions were expressed? Nothing else so woos out the best in us--as love does.

But it is not in homes only--that we sin against others by not speaking the word we ought to speak. In all our fellowship with people--there is too much of the same thoughtless and unloving reticence. We cannot lift men's heavy burdens off their shoulders--but we could make them braver and stronger to bear these burdens--if we would but speak the ringing word of cheer that we might speak! Do we always do it?

A popular writer, referring to years of hard and disheartening toil in her own early life, tells of the help she got from a friend whenever she met him. He would say, "How goes it, Louisa? Keep your heart up. God bless you!" She says she always went back to her lonely room and her struggles, after meeting this friend, comforted and heartened by his cheering words. It would not cost any of us much--to form the habit of saying a bright, hopeful word to everyone we meet; and we cannot know what helpfulness there would be for others, in this habit.

There is never any lack of appreciative words--when one is dead. Everybody then comes with some reminiscence of his kindness, some grateful expression concerning him. But that is not the right time for love's gentle thoughts to thaw out. It is too late!

"Ah! woe for the word that is never said

--Until the ear is deaf to hear,

And woe for the lack to the fainting head

--Of the ringing shout of cheer!

Ah! woe for the laggard feet that tread

--In the mournful wake of the bier!

A pitiful thing the gift today--

That is dross and nothing worth,

Though if it had come but yesterday

It had brimmed with sweet the earth;

A fading rose in a death-cold hand,

That perished in need and dearth!

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