

Timeliness in Duty

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of timeliness in duty and the consequences of delaying or neglecting opportunities.

Scripture: Proverbs 27:1, Ecclesiastes 3:1, Matthew 25:13, Luke 12:40, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 5:15-16, Hebrews 3:15, James 4:14, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Duty and Responsibility", "Timeliness"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the critical importance of timeliness in fulfilling our duties, arguing that actions taken at the right moment can yield blessings, while delays render them ineffective. He illustrates this principle through various examples, such as offering support to friends in need during their struggles rather than after the fact, and the necessity of preparation for life's challenges. Miller warns that neglecting timely duties can lead to missed opportunities and regrets later in life, urging listeners to recognize the significance of each moment. He encourages individuals to be vigilant guardians of one another, as the time to act is often before danger strikes. Ultimately, he calls for a faithful embrace of daily responsibilities to prepare for future challenges and opportunities.

Transcript

The element of time is a vital matter in many duties. Done at the right moment, there is a blessing in them; delayed, they were as well not done at all. If we sleep through the hour for duty--we may as well sleep on after the hour. Waking then will not avail to accomplish that which we were set to do.

There are many applications of this principle. Whatever we do for our friends--we must do when they need our help. If one is sick, the time to show our affection and our sympathy is while the sickness continues, and not after the friend is well again. If we allow him to pass through his illness without showing him any attention, there is no use, when he is going about again, for us to wake up, and begin to lavish kindness upon him; he does not need it now, and it will do him no good.

If one of our friends is passing through some sore struggle with temptation, and is in danger of being overcome, then is the time to come up close alongside of him, and put the strength of our love under his weakness to support him. If we fail him then, we may almost as well let him go on alone altogether after that. Of what use is sympathy--when the struggle is over? Of what use is help--when the battle has been fought through, and won without us? Or, suppose the friend was not victorious; suppose he failed in the battle--failed because no one came to him to help him, because we did not come with the sustaining

strength of our sympathy. Suppose that, left to struggle unaided with enemies or difficulties or adversities, he was defeated, and sank down crushed and hopeless--is there any use in our hurrying up to him now, to offer our assistance? Is not the time past when help could avail him? Can our sympathy now enable him to retrieve what he has lost? Can our faithfulness today--atone for our unfaithfulness yesterday?

Most of us are in some way, the guardians of other souls. The time to fulfill our duty of guardianship, is when the dangers are imminent. There is no use for the look-out on the ship to become vigilant--only after the vessel is among the rocks. There is no use for the sentinel, in the time of war, to arouse and begin to watch--when the enemy has stolen in and captured the field.

Are you your brother's keeper? Are you set to watch against danger to his soul? Are you a parent, whose duty it is to guard your own children against the perils of sin that lurk in ambush all about them? Are you a teacher, with a class of young people entrusted to your care, to shield and train and keep? Are you a sister, with brothers dear to you, whom you are to protect from temptation? Are you a brother, and have you sisters tender and exposed to danger, whose defender you should be? Are you a friend, and is there one beset by perils, over whom God has set you as guide or protector? Are you watching--or are you sleeping? Remember that the time to watch, is before the danger has done its deadly work.

When, through your negligence, the danger has come, and has destroyed the precious life--you may almost as well sleep on! Watching then ever so faithfully, will not undo the evil which is done.

In the preparation for duty or for struggle in our personal life, the same principle applies. There is a time for this preparation, when it can be made; and if it is not made then, it cannot be made at all. It is a rule of providential leading--that opportunity is always given to everyone to prepare for whatever part he is to take in life, and for whatever experience he is ordained to meet. The days come to us linked one to another--so that simple faithfulness today, always prepares us for the duty of tomorrow. Or the days are like steps on a stairway, each one meant to lift our feet, and make us ready for the next. If one only embraces and uses his opportunities as they come to him, one by one--he will never be surprised by any sudden emergency in life, whether of duty or of trial, for which he will not be ready.

For example, before life's stern, fierce conflicts, which put manhood's strongest fibre to the test--we have childhood and youth as seasons for calm preparation. He who rightly improves these seasons, is fully ready for whatever life may bring.

It is just because these opportunities for preparation come to us so quietly, and without announcement, not recognized by us at the time as important, or as carrying in them any elements of destiny for us--that so many fail to improve them. The school-boy does not see what good it will do him to know the simple things that are set as his daily tasks, and neglects to learn them. Twenty, or forty years afterward, he fails in the position to which he is called, because he slurred his boyhood lessons in the quiet school-days long ago. The young apprentice takes no pains to perfect himself in the trade he has chosen, and consequently is only a fourth-class workman all his life, while diligence in youth would have prepared him for highest excellence. The young professional man dislikes the dry drudgery that the early years bring to him, and neglects it, waiting until some great opportunity comes to lift him into prominence. The opportunity comes at length--but he fails in it, because he has not improved the long series of preparatory steps that came before.

On the other hand, a school-boy does every task faithfully. He never slights a lesson; he goes thoroughly over every day's studies; he does not see, any more than the other, of what particular use these things will

be to him when he is a man, in active life, nor does he ask; his only care is to be faithful now in every duty. Years later he rises to high places which he never could have filled, had he slurred his boyhood's tasks. A physician is suddenly called to take charge of a critical case, requiring the best skill in the world. He is successful, and wins fame for himself, because in the long, quiet years of obscure practice, he has been diligent. If he had not been faithful in those years of routine work--he must have failed when the great opportunity came. He could not have made the necessary preparation at the moment when suddenly called to act. The case could only be met by the instant use of knowledge and skill already acquired and available.

It is a secret worth knowing and remembering, that the truest, and indeed the only possible, preparation for life's duties or trials--is made by simple fidelity in whatever each day brings. A day squandered anywhere, may prove the dropped stitch from which the whole web will begin to unravel. One lesson neglected, may prove to have contained the very knowledge for the lack of which, further along in the course, the student may fail. One opportunity let slip, may be the first step in a ladder leading to eminence or power--but no higher rounds of which can be gained, because the first step was not taken.

We never know what is important for life--or when we are standing at the open doors of great opportunities in life. The most insignificant duty that offers, may be the first lesson in preparation for a noble mission; if we despise or neglect it--we miss the grand destiny, the gate to which was open just for that one moment. Indeed, every hour of life holds the keys of the next hour, and possibly of many hours more; to fail of our duty in any one of them, may be to lose the most splendid opportunity through all life to the end.

So the times of preparation come silently and unawares; and many neglect them, not knowing what depends upon them; but neglected, and allowed to slip away, they can never be regained. The man who finds himself in the presence of a great duty or opportunity which he cannot take up or accept, because he is not prepared for it--cannot then go back to make the needful preparation. The soldier cannot learn the art of war--in the face of the battle. The Christian cannot, in an unexpected emergency of temptation, gather in a moment all needed spiritual power. Not to be ready in advance for great duties or great needs--is to fail!

The lesson is important, and has infinite applications. You cannot go back today to do the work you neglected to do yesterday. You cannot make preparation for life, when the burden of life is on you. Opportunities never return! They must be taken on the wing--or they cannot be taken at all. There is a time for every duty; and done at that precise time--its outcomes and results may be infinite and eternal. But deferred or neglected--it may never be worth while to take it up again.

Many of us in our later years, have in our hands only the most pitiful things of life--withered leaves, faded flowers, straws, and bits of worthless tinsel--while we can see afar in their bright glory--the kingdoms, diadems, and crowns which we have missed--which might have been ours, had we but taken them when they were offered to us. Let the young learn the lesson, and miss no chance that life brings, and refuse no blessing which the commonest day presents, in whatever plainness of form. It may be only a dull, dry little seed which is held out to you--but in it is enfolded a rare, sweet flower--which some day will fill your room with fragrance, if you accept it. You cannot have the flower then--unless you take the seed today.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net