

# The Blessing of Quietness

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon explores the profound blessings of quietness in our relationship with God and others, advocating for the power of silence over speech.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 17:28, Proverbs 21:23, Ecclesiastes 3:7, Isaiah 30:15, Philippians 4:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:11, James 1:19, 1 Peter 3:4

**Topics:** "Peace in God", "The Power of Silence"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound blessings of quietness, illustrating how it benefits both the individual and those around them. He highlights the biblical wisdom that encourages silence, noting that while speaking has its place, there are times when being quiet is far more valuable. Miller draws on scriptural examples, such as the life of Christ and the teachings of the apostles, to advocate for a quiet spirit and the importance of thoughtful speech. He warns against the dangers of careless words and gossip, urging believers to cultivate a spirit of peace and restraint in their interactions. Ultimately, he concludes that true strength lies in the ability to remain silent in the face of provocation and to find peace in God's presence.

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## Transcript

Quietness, like mercy, is twice blessed: it blesses him who is quiet, and it blesses the man's friends and neighbors. Talk is good in its way. "There is a time to speak," but there is also "a time to be silent," and in silence many of life's sweetest blessings come.

An Italian proverb says, "He who speaks does sow; he who holds his tongue does reap." We all know the other saying which rates speech as silver--and silence as gold. There are in the Scriptures, too, many strong persuasives to quietness, and many exhortations against noise. It was prophesied of the Christ: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." As we read the Gospels we see that our Lord's whole life, was a fulfillment of this ancient prophecy. He made no noise in the world. He did his work without excitement, without parade, without confusion. He wrought as the light works--silently, yet pervasively and with resistless energy.

Quietness is urged, too, on Christ's followers. "Study to be quiet," writes an apostle. "Busybodies" the same apostle exhorts to "quiet working, they may eat their own bread." Prayers are to be made for rulers "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." Another apostle, writing to Christian women, speaks of their true adornment: "You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." Solomon rates quietness in a home, far above the

best of luxuries: "Better a dry crust with peace and quiet--than a house full of feasting, with strife."

A prophet declares the secret of power in these words: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength;" and likewise says, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." It is set down also as one of the blessings of God's people, that they shall dwell in "quiet resting-places."

These are but a few of very many scriptural statements concerning quietness--but they are enough to indicate several lessons that we may profitably consider.

We should be quiet toward God. The expression "Rest in the Lord," in one of the Psalms, is in the margin "Be silent to the Lord." We are not to speak back to God--when he speaks to us. We are not to reason with him or dispute with him--but are to bow in silent and loving acquiescence before him: "Be still, and know that I am God." It is in those providences which cut sorely into our lives, and require sacrifice and loss on our part--that we are specially called to this duty.

There is a moving illustration of silence to God in the case of Aaron when his sons had offered strange fire, and had died before the Lord for their disobedience and sacrilege. The record says, "And Aaron held his peace." He even made no natural human outcry of grief. He accepted the terrible penalty as unquestionably just--and bowed in the acquiescence of faith.

This silence to God should be our attitude in all times of trial, when God's ways with us are bitter and painful. Why should we complain at anything that our Father may do? We have no right to utter a word of murmuring, for he is our sovereign Lord, and our simple duty is instant, unquestioning submission. Then we have no reason to complain, for we know that all God's dealings with us--are in loving wisdom. His will is always best for us, whatever sacrifice or suffering it may cost.

We should train ourselves to be quiet also toward men. There are times when we should speak, and when words are mighty and full of blessing. Universal silence would not be a blessing to the world. Among the most beneficent of God's gifts to us--is the power of speech. And we are to use our tongues. There are some people who are altogether too quiet in certain directions, and toward certain people.

There is no place where good words are more fitting--than between husband and wife--yet there are husbands and wives who pass weeks and months together in almost unbroken silence. They will travel long journeys side by side in the railway-car, and utter scarcely a word in the whole distance. They will walk to and from church, and neither will speak. In the home-life they will pass whole days with nothing more in the form of speech between them, than an indifferent remark about the weather, a formal inquiry and a monosyllabic answer.

"According to Milton, Eve kept silence in Eden to hear her husband talk," said a gentleman to a lady, adding in a melancholy tone, "Alas! there have been no Eves since!" "Because," quickly retorted the lady, "there have been no husbands worth listening to!" Perhaps the retort was just. Husbands certainly ought to have something to say when they come into their homes from the busy world outside. They are usually genial enough, in the circles of business or politics or literature, and are able to talk so as to interest others. Ought they not to seek to be as genial in their own homes, especially toward their own wives? Most women, too, are able to talk in general society. Why, then, should a wife fall into such a mood of silence the moment she and her husband are alone? It was Franklin who wisely said, "As we must account for every idle word--so must we for every idle silence." We must not forget that silence may be

sadly overdone, especially in homes.

There are other silences that are also to be deplored. People keep in their hearts unspoken, the kindly words they might utter-- and ought to utter--in the ears of the weary, the soul-hungry and the sorrowing about them. The ministry of good words is one of wondrous power--yet many of us are wretched misers, with our gold and silver coin of speech. Is any miserliness so base? Ofttimes we allow hearts to starve close beside us, though in our very hands we have abundance to feed them.

One who attends the funeral of any ordinary man and listens to what his neighbors have to say about him as they stand by his coffin--will hear enough kind words spoken to have brightened whole years of his life. But how was it when the man was living, toiling and struggling, among these very people? Ah! they were not so faithful then with their grateful, appreciative words. They were too quiet toward him then. Silence was overdone.

Quietness is carried too far--when it makes us disloyal to the hearts that crave our words of love and sympathy.

But there is a quietness toward others which all should cultivate. There are many words spoken, which ought never to pass the door of the lips. There are people who seem to exercise no restraint whatever, on their speech. They allow every passing thought or feeling--to take form in words. They never think what the effect of their words will be--how they will fly like arrows shot by some careless marksman and will pierce hearts they were never meant to hurt! Thus friendships are broken, and injuries are inflicted, which can never be repaired! Careless words are forever making grief and sorrow in tender spirits. We pity the mute whom sometimes we meet. Muteness is more blessed by far than speech--if all we can do with our marvelous gift is to utter bitter, angry, abusive or sharp, cutting words"

"I heedlessly opened the cage

And suffered my bird to go free,

And, though I besought it with tears to return,

It nevermore came back to me.

It nests in the wildwood and heeds not my call;

Oh, the bird once at liberty--who can enthrall?

"I hastily opened my lips

And uttered a word of disdain

That wounded a friend, and forever estranged

A heart I would die to regain.

But the bird once at liberty--oh who can enthrall?

And the word that's once spoken--oh who can recall?"

Rose Cooke, in one of her poems--"Unreturning", shows in very strong phrase, the irreparableness of the harm done or the hurt given by unkind words. Flowers fade--but there will be more flowers another year---just as sweet ones, too, as those that are gone. Snow melts and disappears--but it will snow again. The crystals of dew on leaf and grassblade vanish when the sun rises--but tomorrow morning there will be other dewdrops as brilliant as those which are lost. But words once uttered--can never be said over to be changed, nor can they ever be gotten back.

Another kind of common talk that had better be repressed into complete silence, is the miserable gossip which forms so large a part--let us confess it and deplore it--of ordinary parlor conversation! Few appreciative and kindly things are spoken of absent ones--but there is no end to criticism, snarling and backbiting! The most unsavory bits of scandal are served with relish, and no pure character is armored against the virulence and maliciousness of the tongues that chatter on as innocently and glibly as if they were telling sweet stories of good. It certainly would be infinitely better, if all this kind of speech were reduced to utter silence. It were better that the ritual of fashion prescribed some sort of a speechless pantomime for social calls and receptions, in place of any conversation whatever, if there is nothing to be talked about but the faults and foibles and the characters and doings of absent people!

Will not someone preach a crusade against backbiting? Shall we not have a new annual "week of prayer" to cry to God for the gift of silence--when we have nothing good or true or beautiful to say? No victories should be more heroically battled for, or more thankfully recorded, than victories of silence when we are tempted to speak unhallowed words of others!

Silence is better, also, than any words of bickering and strife. There is no surer, better way of preventing quarrels--than by the firm restraining of speech. "A soft answer turns away anger;" but if we cannot command the "soft answer" when another person is angry, the second-best thing is not to speak at all. "Grievous words stir up anger." Many a long, fierce strife that has produced untold pain and heart-breaking, would never have been anything more than a momentary flash of anger--if one of the parties had practiced the holy art of silence.

Someone tells of the following arrangement which worked successfully in preventing family quarrels: "You see, sir," said an old man, speaking of a couple in his neighborhood who lived in perfect harmony, "they had agreed between themselves that whenever he came home a little contrary and out of temper--he would wear his hat on the back of his head, and then she never said a word; and if she came in a little cross and crooked, she would throw her shawl over her left shoulder--and he never said a word." So they never quarreled.

He who has learned to be silent, spares himself oftentimes from confusion. Many men have owed their reputation for great wisdom, quite as much to their silence as to their speech. They have not spoken the many foolish things of the glib talker, and have uttered only few and well-considered words. Says Carlyle, denouncing the rapid verbiage of shallow praters, "Even triviality and imbecility that can sit silent--how respectable are they in comparison!"

An English writer gives the story of a groom wedded to a lady of wealth. He was in constant fear of being ridiculed by his wife's guests. A clergyman said to him, "Wear a black coat--and hold your tongue." The new husband followed the advice, and soon was considered one of the finest gentlemen in the country. The power of keeping quiet would be worth a great deal to many people, whose tongues are forever betraying their ignorance, and revealing their true character.

All true culture, is toward the control and the restraining of speech. Christian faith gives a quietness, which in itself is one of life's holiest blessings. It gives the quietness of peace--a quietness which the wildest storms cannot disturb, which is a richer possession than all the world's wealth or power.

"Study to be quiet." The lesson may be hard to many of us--but it is well worth all the cost of learning. It brings strength and peace to the heart. Speech is good--but oftentimes silence is better. He who has learned to hold his tongue--is a greater conqueror than the warrior who subdues an empire! The power to be silent under provocations and wrongs, and in the midst of danger and alarms--is the power of the noblest, royalest victoriousness!

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