

~Other Speakers G-L: Jack Hayford:

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matthew 11:12).

These are among Christ's least understood words. They follow on the heels of His words about John the Baptist's break from the traditional image of a "religious person." He says, in effect, "If you went out to see Mr. Cool-and-Sophisticated, he had to be a disappointment!"

There's something blunt, rough, and unpolished about Kingdom people. Yet we're called to be gentle, harmless, gracious, and hospitable, too. How do those traits merge?

I believe the answer is in our spirit - the way we approach spiritual things. A Kingdom person is never called to reduce his or her sensitivity toward people, tenderness in loving, or generosity of attitude. To the contrary, you can count on a genuine believer to mature into a lovely lady or a real gentleman.

But when you get that lady or gentleman face-to-face with a spiritual challenge, she or he will become violent. The person will become indignant with the gall of the devil to attempt to encroach upon a realm wherein Christ has worked redemption. Such believers are impatient with demons and antagonistic toward any of hell's working. A person who has begun to understand the nature of the spiritual struggle will be kind in demeanor toward people, but vicious in his or her prayer life and spiritual warfare.

We don't need "mild-mannered Clark Kent" saints when super-prayer is the order of the day. There are times to get down on the prayer-bones, call out with strong cryings, seek hard after God, and strike down the work of the devil.

I don't know how to precisely describe this to you, but I know it works for me. Quite often, I find myself drifting in a kind of prayer limbo. Sort of "asking" God to "help" with some problem. Then, feeling I'm getting nowhere, I am jerked to the awareness that I'm praying the wrong way.

I'm begging when I ought to be battling.

I need to rise up in violent, fervent prayer to "possess the land" in discussion. It's as though the Father is saying, "You've taken counsel with Me long enough. YOU go forth against the enemy - and I'll go before you."

Please understand. This violence is not a shrieking wrestling match to attempt to twist something from God's hand which He only reluctantly wants us to have.

No.

But it is a contest. There is a "contending" that is needed, and the Holy Spirit wants to bring us all to a place of understanding that some obstacles yield before us only by forcible praying.

This is difficult to describe without sounding as though the accomplishment is a mere effort of human energy and emotionalism. It is neither. It is rather a release of divine intervention proportionate to our willingness to execute God's will in authoritative praying. Read Psalm 149...it's all there.

Begin with worship and praise.

Sing unto the Lord a new song,
And His praise in the congregation of saints.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
Let them praise His name with the dance (vv. 1-3).

Acknowledge your place in Christ - "humble" under His authoritative Lordship, and securely confident in His salvation, His finished work at Calvary.

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

Taking It by Force

He will beautify the humble with salvation.

**Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds (vv. 4-5).**

Then attack! Take the enemy off guard, and possess the land - the victory you seek - by force.

**Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment (vv. 6-9a).**

As the psalmist says. "This honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!" (v.9b).