

Articles and Sermons :: Holy Violence

Holy Violence - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/8/21 20:38

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Matthew 11:12

"The exercises of the worship of God are contrary to nature; therefore, there must be a provoking of ourselves to them. The movement of the soul toward sin is natural, but its movement toward heaven is violent. The stone moves easily to the center. It has an innate propensity downward, but to draw up a millstone into the air is done by violence because it is against nature. So to lift up the heart to heaven in duty is done by violence and we must provoke ourselves to it.

What is it to provoke ourselves to duty? It is to awaken ourselves and shake off spiritual slothfulness. Let us then examine whether we put forth this holy violence for heaven. Do we set time apart to call ourselves to account and to try our evidences for heaven? "My spirit made diligent search" (Ps. 77:6). Do we take our hearts, as a watch, all in pieces to see what is amiss and to mend it? Are we curiously inquisitive into the state of our souls? Are we afraid of artificial grace, as we are of artificial happiness? Do we use violence in prayer?

Is there fire in our sacrifice? Is the wind of the Spirit filling our sails, causing unutterable groans (Rom. 8:26)? Do we pray in the morning as if we were to die at night? Do we thirst for the living God? Are our souls enlarged with holy desires? "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalm 73:25). Do we desire holiness as well as heaven? Do we desire as much to look like Christ as to live with Christ? Is our desire constant? Is this spiritual pulse ever beating?

Are we skilled in self-denial? Can we deny our ease, our aims, our interests? Can we cross our own will to fulfill God's? Can we behead our beloved sin? To pluck out the right eye requires violence. (Matthew 18:9). Are we lovers of God? It is not how much we do, but how much we love. Does love command the castle of our hearts? Does Christ's beauty and sweetness constrain us? (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Do we love God more than we fear hell? Do we keep our spiritual watch? Do we set spies in every place, watching our thoughts, our eyes, our tongues? When we, have prayed against sin, do we watch against temptation? Do we press after further degrees of sanctity? "Reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13). A good Christian is a wonder; he is the most contented yet the least satisfied. He is contented with a little of the world, but not satisfied with a little grace.

How violent Christ was about our salvation! He was in agony; He "continued all night in prayer" (Luke 6:12). He wept, He fasted, He died a violent death; He rose violently out of the grave. Was Christ so violent for our salvation, and does it not become us to be violent who are so intimately concerned in it? Christ's violence was not only satisfactory, but exemplary. It was not only to appease God, but to teach us. Christ was violent in dying to teach us to be violent in believing."

- Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

Brothers and Sisters, this really puts Matthew 11:12 into a proper perspective, doesn't it? As Charles Spurgeon said regarding the Puritans, "There were giants in the land in those days." I agree. May God raise up a whole new breed of holy preachers in our day - preachers with a puritanical measure of godly wisdom and holy living and gospel power. May it begin in our day, and may our sanctified hearts be the flaming gates through which this righteous, all-consuming zeal of the Lord's purity is ushered. Every word of Watson's message resonates within my inner man like a volley of cannon fire. Oh God, I want nothing but utter holiness, perfect sanctified purity of heart, mind and soul, nothing but the cleansing flame and sin-destroying blood flowing through my spiritual veins. Fire-baptize my thirsty spirit with a fresh wave of blazing holiness, humility, obedience, love and sin-conquering victory in Jesus Christ's Name! Hallelujah to our Holy, Holy, Holy God for ever and ever!

Brother Paul

Re: Holy Violence - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/8/21 22:32

Quote:

A good Christian is a wonder; he is the most contented yet the least satisfied. He is contented with a little of the world, but not satisfied with a little grace.

This brought me to another Puritan writing in the back of my mind right away:

"It may be said of one who is contented in a Christian way that he is the most contented man in the world, and yet the most unsatisfied man in the world; these two together must needs be mysterious. I say, a contented man, just as he is the most contented, so he is the most unsatisfied man in the world."

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment

By Jeremiah Burroughs (a contemporary of Watson)

The Puritan saints would definitely be awe struck if they walk into some of our 'churches', filling with violence of an unholy sort.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/8/21 23:19

Quote:

-----The Puritan saints would definitely be awe struck if they walk into some of our 'churches', filling with violence of an unholy sort.

Sister, I don't even think the likes of a Watson or Owen would even *recognize* Christianity in our American mainstream churches today. They would probably deem our present system a most heretical perversion of the true gospel of holiness and self-denial, and a confounding monstrosity of biblical vernacular mixed in with outright lawlessness, and, as you said, unholy violence. Those words might sound harsh to some people here, but are they really that far off from the truth?

Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2006/8/21 23:26

);, praise Him !