

"...AND THE VIOLENT TAKE IT BY FORCE"

Bible Reading: Matthew 11:1-28

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). Our emphasis this quarter is on **One Focus**. It centres on our future, our eternal hope, our heavenly home, our coveted prize, our final rest. Our prayer today is to uproot whatever will hinder us in the narrow way and make us unfit for that heavenly Kingdom.

THE DEMAND FOR KINGDOM VIOLENCE Matthew 11: 11

"And from the days of John the Baptist...". Why particularly from John the Baptist? Because the emphasis changed then. John had peculiar ministry. He was the forerunner of Jesus. **He ushered in the era of thorough repentance** proven by fruits that should follow (Mat 3:2,8). **He also ushered in the era of faith on "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29). People should now look from the physical to the spiritual, from sacrifices, rituals, signs, to the Person of Jesus Christ. It was a radical thing, which demanded abandoning dead works and exercising the violence of faith that takes heaven by storm.

THE DESCRIPTION OF KINGDOM VIOLENCE Matthew 11:12

It is personal prayer today, which should address concrete points. What kind of violence is this?

1. **The violence of repentance and faith** – it is heeding the command to turn away from sin and believe the claims of the true gospel (Matt 3:1,7-10; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:20,21; Rev 3:19).
2. **The violence of practical restitution** – it is showing evident fruits of repentance in making our rights wrong in marriage, at work, paying back just debts, restoring stolen articles, correcting wrong records with government or institutions (e.g. identity fraud). It is to have a right standing before God and have a conscience void of offence toward Him and toward men (Matt 5:23-25; Acts 19:8,19; 24:16).
3. **The violence of holding fast your profession in the time of trial to avoid backsliding** – it is being anchored in Christ, staying true to Him because you know and serve Him (Matt 11:2-6; Heb 10:35-39).
4. **The violence of agonising to enter before the Master of the house locks the door** – it is dropping excess luggage, cutting of offending relationships, being brutal against the flesh, etc. (Luk 13:23-30).
5. **The violence of coming to Christ, taking His yoke upon you** – it is seeking Christ beyond food or shelter, yielding your life to Him and following Him to be like Him (Matt 11:28-30; Luke 14:25-27).
6. **The violence of separation and watchfulness against the attraction of the world** – it is not being weighed down with the cares of life and obsessed with personal problems (Luke 21:34-36).
7. **The violence of consecration, prayer and resisting unto blood to break the power of besetting sins** – it is giving it all it takes to be completely free from the hold of such sins (Heb 12:1-4).
8. **The violence of looking diligently to avoid the defilement of the root of bitterness** – it is warfare to free yourself from harbouring offences, malice, and internal injuries that defile (Heb 12:15).
9. **The violence of self-denial to avoid the bitter cry of selling your birthright and being rejected eternally** – it is not being careless like Esau who sold his birthright because he thought he was going to die just because of hunger of a few hours! He lost eternal life (Gen 25:29-34; 27:32-34; Heb 12:16-17).
10. **The violence of fleeing and avoiding error and false doctrine from people who are not serious about the word of God** – it is watching what you hear and following the Bible strictly (2 Pet 2:1).
11. **The violence of grace and sobriety in ministry to avoid being consumed by fire** – it is to avoid frivolity, and strange fire, honouring God's word and serving Him with fear and trembling (Heb 12:28-29).
12. **The violence of diligence and vigilance so your work is not burnt** – it is to follow God's pattern and ensure your labour satisfies divine specification, not self, pride or human praise (1 Cor 3:15).
13. **The violence of putting yourself under so that you are not cast away after preaching to others** – it is living in temperance, being disciplined, being responsible, being serious (1 Cor 9:24-27).
14. **The violence of constant watching, holding fast so no man will take your crown** – it is not dropping your conviction, consecration, guard and duty post till you take your place in heaven (Rev 3:11).

PRAYER POINTS: Turn every point above into fervent prayer!