

Take It By Force!

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12. Violence and force are not words we often think of in Christianity. But, there they are, big as life, spoken by the Lord himself. A powerful truth, often eluded by the church, is contained in this verse.

For about three centuries there was great darkness upon the earth, with no record of any great prophets. The Pharisees and Sadducees were some of the leaders of God's people. You need only to read of these leaders in the gospels to discern where Israel was spiritually. They needed a savior "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death". The devil was probably on vacation somewhere, so little threat did he feel from mankind at this juncture in history. But, to this dark world was sent the mightiest prophet of all time, John the Baptist, filled with the Spirit, living a fasting life on locusts and honey, hidden away in the wilderness till the time of "his showing unto Israel."

When once his voice "crying in the wilderness" was at last heard in Israel, Satan's vacation abruptly came to an end, as he began his counterattack to the launching of God's eternal plan of deliverance for His people. "The kingdom of heaven" began "suffering violence". The kingdom of heaven is the place where God desires to establish his rulership in our lives: his salvation, his deliverance, his power, his healing, his victory. This invisible realm is where the angels ascend and descend from the presence of God to "minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation" Heb. 1:14. However, this arena of the kingdom is also the battlefield of the devil, where we "wrestle" with "spiritual wickedness in high places". Eph. 6:12. Who will control this territory?

From John's days forward, the powers of the darkness of this world began violently resisting every attempt of heaven to establish God's kingdom on earth. After John's very short ministry, (scholars say perhaps only 6-18 months duration), Satan succeeded in having John beheaded. But, the battle continued to rage. Thus Jesus taught that God's kingdom, and his rulership in our lives, would be established on this earth only if "the violent take it by force". Violent, take, and force: we are focusing on these words this month.

Violent: In the Greek, the word translated violent is "biastes" and means "energetic". The root word is "bia" which means "vital activity", kin to "Bios" which means "Life"(a sermon by Jack Hayford). In simple words, to get violent means you get animated, you expend energy, and are vitally active. In the natural, violence pictures something strong, quick, unexpected, painful, and dominating. Picture a man with a gun, forcing someone to give him his money, pushing him to the ground, taking his possessions away from him. This in the natural shows what really happens in the spiritual.

A Christian determines to take back what the Devil has stolen from him, so he uses a weapon ("The weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (II Cor. 10:4) and forces him to the ground, then violently rips out of his hands his possession, leaving him wounded, beaten, and empty handed. We are to be

meek and humble toward men, but we are to be mean and violent toward the devil. "These signs shall follow them that believe, in my name, they shall CAST OUT DEVILS" (Mark 16:17). We don't show them politely to the door, or beg them to leave. No, we Cast them out! This is a violent act. When I cast devils out of people, I use a loud voice. I am mad at what they have done to their victim. I get violent in my intercession.

On the phone a man once told me glibly and condescendingly, "the Lord will show you don't have to yell at demons". Then, later in the conversation admitted that he still smoked. He had never gotten violent about the demons that had him in bondage to nicotine, yet had the gall to tell me I didn't need to get violent against demons. If you can get violent without getting angry and loud, it's OK, of course! But, do get violent (animated)!

There are other ways to get violent in spiritual warfare. For instance, fasting. Doesn't your stomach get violent when you fast? God has chosen fasting as the "atomic bomb" of spiritual warfare. Jesus did it 40 days before starting his ministry. Daniel 10 shows that there was warfare going on in the heavenlies while Daniel was on a "no pleasant bread" fast. Eventually, the devil could no longer stand the violence of his fasting, as Michael at last came to the rescue and wrestled the "prince of Persia" out of the way of the answer to Daniel's prayer. You can get violent in your prayers, in praise, singing, dancing, shouting, vehemently quoting scriptures to an invisible foe!

"The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." (Luke 16:16). No man is going to get saved without shoving aside the demons of unbelief. We must press past the "Sunday go to meeting" crowds who are stuck in the quicksand of mediocrity. Consider the verb used in conjunction with spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:12: "wrestle" Wrestling involves pressure, pressing with all your might against the foe.

In a wrestling match, one is going to go backward and one is going to move forward. One is going to be on the bottom and one is going to be on the top. It's the same with the devil. Whose on top in your life? The reason why we must get violent and apply pressure is because the devil has built "strongholds" of defense. A stronghold is any area of our life where the devil has planted the flag and claimed victory. He controls the situation. He dictates the terms. Thus II Cor. 10:3-5 says, "pulling down strongholds" and "bringing into captivity".

It's war – not a defensive war – but offensive in nature. Defensive Christians are just trying to stay saved, satisfied with the status quo, defending their few goods from the devil's attacks. But, offensive Christians aren't satisfied with past accomplishments or rest on their present laurels. They ever press against the gates of Hell to pull down more and more of Satan's strongholds.

I counseled with a couple who were struggling with their marriage last year. I spoke with them again this year and asked them, "What are you doing differently this year that you weren't doing last year. If you're not doing something different than you were doing last year, then next year, you'll be the same as you are now." In other words, they have to get violent about recovering their marriage. The status quo is the enemy of the Christian. That brings us to the next word, a verb-action!

Take: Jesus said the violent "take it". In other words, it is our decision and it is our responsibility. This is not something God does for us. I read a book once by a doctor who believed that the best thing you can do for a cold is fast. The 2nd best thing is to just drink clear fluids. (I have found this is true! You'll be amazed how quickly symptoms abate if you just start drinking only fruit juice, chicken broth, etc.). But, then he said something funny. He said, "some people like to keep their colds longer." He suggested they eat fruit. Christians are the same way: Some Christians like to keep their demons longer. They don't want to "take" the necessary measures to "fight the good fight" or to "lay hold on eternal life" (I Tim. 6:12).

I was 15. The dance was over, and I needed a ride home. My cousin and I had met an older youth who had taken us for a drive in his "mother's car" earlier in the evening. We asked him if he wouldn't mind driving us home. He didn't, so my cousin and I and two girls we had met piled into his car. I was in the back seat. As we drove down a busy street, there were suddenly red lights behind us. I said, "it's a fire truck, pull over!" The driver responded, "fire truck nothing, it's the cops!" With that, he sped up and tried to out run them.

It was funny and it was exciting at first. But, then I started thinking to myself, "if those cops start trying to shoot out the tires (that's what they did in the old movies), we might get killed!". So, I learned forward, reached in the front seat area, and pulled the keys out of the ignition. The car rolled to a stop, as the driver jumped out informing us, "run, this is a stolen car!" He didn't get 75 feet from the car before he was tackled by an officer.

They took us all to the station, but let us go later after determining we were innocents. I violently (against the driver's will) had to TAKE hold of the key that "forced" the car to a stop. That's what we have to do with the devil too! Don't let him drive! That's why in Matt. 16:19, Jesus said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven:"

The keys are in the ignition of heaven, waiting for us to TAKE them. But, He adds, "whatever you bind will be bound in heaven." The kingdom will not happen without us. God is waiting for us to use the keys He has provided us to bind Satan's power.

There are some strongholds in our family, community or personal life that will not be removed without violent determination. Charles Finney said, "revival is no more miraculous than a crop of wheat. In any community, revival can be secured from heaven when heroic souls enter the conflict determined to win or die." It's the same with personal strongholds. It TAKES an act of the will, and it is an action. What action do we take?

Force: Police enFORCE the law with weapons, and FORCE criminals to surrender. "Force" in Matt. 11:12 means the use of weapons God has given us ("weapons of our warfare", 11 Corinthians 10:3; "armor of God", Ephesians 6:11-18; "keys to the kingdom", Matthew 16:19). What are the keys of Spiritual warfare God has given to unleash heaven's power? They mighty to the pulling down of strong-holes erected by the devil. Following is a list of weapons relating to spiritual warfare:

TWELVE IRRESISTABLE SPIRITUAL WEAPONS OF OUR OUR WARFARE

1. Faith: "ABOVE ALL, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). "Whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-10)

2. Peace: In the Old Covenant, Our Lord was often called, "The Lord Of Hosts", meaning He is a Warring God who stands alone. He lifts men up and He breaks them down at His own choosing. The Lord of Hosts was the protector of His people. But in the New Covenant, we often refer to Him as the "God Of Peace"...who will shortly injure Satan under our feet! (Romans 16:20).

3. The Word of God: (this is the most important weapon!) "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). "For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Alive! (John 1:1-5; 17:5,17).

4. The name of Jesus: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17,18; See also Philippians 2:9-13).

5. The blood of the Lamb: "they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives to the death" (Rev. 12:11).

6. The mouth (faith's confession): When Jesus was being tempted of the devil, three times he quoted to Satan what the Word had to say about the situation, saying: "It is written" (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). (See Rom 10:9,10; also Rev. 12:11)

7. Praying in the Spirit: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18; and Jude 20).

8. Righteousness: "...having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14; Zech. 3:1-5).

9. Praise: "Out of the mouth of babes ... (Matthew 21:16). "thou hast perfected praise" (quoting and defining Psalm 8:2 which adds), "that thou mayest still the enemy". Praise is the weapon that stills the enemy. (See also II Chron. 20 and Acts 16:25,26 - Paul & Silas in Prison).

10. Fasting and prayer: Daniel's fast binding the Prince of Persia in Daniel 10. Also Matt. 17:17-21, "This kind (of demon) goeth not out by by prayer and fasting".

11. Wisdom: "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10); (The entire Chapter of Prov 8); "by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war" (Prov. 24:6); "A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the

strength of the confidence thereof" (Prov. 21:22). Get God's strategy for your war! It's called wisdom.

12. Binding And Loosing: Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men believe I Am? " ..Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt16:16-19; 1 John 4:15; and Revelation 1:17,18).

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mt 18: 18-20)

Some Of The Benefits Of Binding And Loosing

1. The Keys To The Kingdom Of God: Jesus gave Peter, as representative of His supernatural Church, the keys to the Kingdom of God. These keys carried all authority over the enemy of our souls. Then, in Revelation 1:17,18 Jesus said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.' Here, Jesus comforted John the Revelator in that He – being the Alpha and Omega, the First and The Last, The Beginning and The End, the Eternal One – is in full control of the times – today and forever.

2. Our Authority In Spiritual Warfare: Whatever we, the Church, binds on earth is already bound in heaven; and whatever we loose on earth is already loosed in heaven. Jesus, sitting at the right hand of His Father is agreeing with His saints to the Father this authority and power He gave His Own Church. Jesus stressed this truth in two chapters of Matthew!

3. Two In Agreement: As often as possible, we should have at least one prayer mate who will agree with us as touching anything that we ask on earth. Jesus promised His Father would accomplish this!

4. Two Or Three Gathered In His Name: He promised to be there in their midst. Don't forget God's multiplication tables!

"And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword" (Lev 26:8).

"How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up" (Deu 32:30)?

"These [are] they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks, and they put to flight all [them] of the valleys, [both] toward the east, and toward the west" (1 Ch 12:15).

"A Thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee" (Psalm 91:7).

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The next time you are under Satanic attack, go through this list of keys and weapons. One by one TAKE each one of them in your hand and in your mouth and get VIOLENT in your warfare. The FORCE (dunamis) inherent in each of them will with God's power enable you to see the promise fulfilled: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10: 3-6).