

Violent Prayers

by Denver Cheddie

The term violent prayer is based on the following two scriptures:

Matthew 11:12

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Luke 16:16

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

The Matthew scripture could be interpreted in two possible ways:

- 1) evil people are persecuting the church (bad kind of violence),
- 2) good people are hungering and thirsting for the things of God (good violence).

It is true that John the Baptist was beheaded, but there was no major persecution of God’s people during the time of Christ. After his ascension, the persecution started in a big way. So the first interpretation is unlikely. The second interpretation is more plausible. Around the time of Christ, you could divide the people into three groups – those who hated Christ, those who believed he was from God but were afraid of the high priests, and those who followed him with their whole hearts. Those who followed him with their whole hearts are the ones He described as being violent, taking the kingdom by force, and pressing into it.

So I define violent prayer as the kind of prayer that moves God and takes the kingdom by force, so to speak. It has nothing to do with physical violence, hand motions, or tone of voice. There are people in the church

who are considered to be spiritual, but the things they say and do cannot be found anywhere in the Bible. Why is there so much "spirituality" that is not based on scripture? This article attempts to develop an understanding of how to pray violently in a biblical manner.

Reasons for Unanswered Prayer

The bible gives a number of reasons why our prayers are not answered.

- 1) Not praying (enough) – James 4:2
- 2) Lack of faith – Matthew 17:20 and others
- 3) Unrighteousness – James 5:16
- 4) Not praying according to God's will – 1 John 5:14
- 5) Praying selfishly – James 4:3

It makes sense that effective prayer is the opposite of those things mentioned above. Here are a number of things that comprise effective or violent prayer:

Violent Prayer

PERSISTENCE

In Matthew 7:7 when Jesus said "ask and you shall receive", he used the continuing tense meaning that we should ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking. I have heard people say that you should just pray once and then after that just thank God for answering. That sounds noble and spiritual, but it is not scriptural.

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus gave a parable about a woman and a judge. The woman pleaded with the judge for justice, but the judge wouldn't hear her. But she persisted and refused to stop until he eventually capitulated. The purpose of that parable was so that people would pray and not lose

heart (Luke 18:1). This tells me something about the mind of God. Why would Jesus teach us to pray without losing heart? It is because He knows that God often delays His answers to our prayers, such that it is very easy for us to lose heart and to give up. But God wants us to keep on praying persistently.

KINGDOM FOCUS

The Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) contains 10 lines. Personal needs "Give us this day our daily bread" constitute just 1/10 of the Lord's prayer. Why is it that our needs take up 90% of our prayer time? It is because modern day Christians are not kingdom focused. We believe that Jesus died on the cross so we could be happy and comfortable here on earth, and that God's kingdom revolves around our needs and wants. This is what James 4:2 talks about. We pray and pray and do not get, because our focus is on our own selfish desires. He calls it praying amiss.

A lot of Paul's prayers are recorded in the bible. Here is a partial list (just hover over the scriptures to read them):

Romans 1:9; 10:1; 15:30-32; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 2 Corinthians 13:9; Ephesians 1:16; 3:14-19; 6:18-20; Philippians 1:3-4, 9; Colossians 1:3; 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 3:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4.

You will notice that Paul hardly prays for himself. Most of his prayers are for the salvation and spiritual growth of others. When he does request prayer for himself, he normally prays for boldness to preach, open doors for ministry etc. His prayers are all kingdom focused. Our prayers are mainly self-centered. And when God does not answer, we invent new

doctrines such as decree and declare, and we tell ourselves that this is the new formula for answered prayer.

Having said that, we should pray for our needs. There is a time and place for that. There is one incident where Paul prayed for a personal need.

2 Corinthians 12:

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

He was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. He prayed three times for it to be removed. Then God said "my grace is sufficient for you", in other words, "I am not removing any thorn". After that Paul's disposition changed. He actually rejoiced in his infirmity because it gave Christ an opportunity to show His strength.

Amazing isn't it, how different Paul was from us? God did not answer his prayer and he found a reason to rejoice because God was being glorified. I know people who backslid because God did not give them a husband in their timeframe. We must understand that our personal needs and wants may not always line up with God's will. Paul prayed for his need, but God gave him understanding why He was not going to answer his prayer. That's how we should pray. Pray for our needs, but also pray for understanding of what God's will is ... and accept it either way.

FERVENCY

James 5:16 says the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. It goes on to say that Elijah was a regular guy just like us. He had strengths and weaknesses just as we do. But he prayed earnestly and God heard him. Violent prayer should be fervent. We should pray with all our emotions.

James 5:13 says that if we are suffering we should pray, and if we are cheerful we should sing psalms. In other words, how you pray is heavily dependent on your circumstances. When we are going through difficult times, we are able to pray with a lot more emotion and fervor than at other times. The Psalms are full of instances where people found themselves in very dire situations and cried out to God in desperation. There is something very powerful about crying out to God when your back is against a wall.

Hezekiah cried out to God, and God heard him (2 Kings 20:5). Ahab was a wicked king, yet when he cried to God, God heard (1 Kings 21:29). Manasseh was worse, and God heard him when he cried out in desperation (2 Chronicles 33:12,13). God even told Israel that if they oppressed the foreigners and they cried out to God, he would hear them and His wrath would burn against Israel, his own people (Exodus 22:21-24). How much more would God hear us when we cry out to him in desperation!

For some reason, God takes glory in helping people who are in desperate situations. The problem is that it is very difficult to cry out to God when all is well. You need to be in a difficult situation. And that is perhaps one reason why God allows us to go through trials, so we can cry out to

Him. That's how we should view trials – as an opportunity to cry out to God in a way that we simply cannot do otherwise.

FAST

Jesus told his disciples that sometimes prayer and fasting are needed for stubborn spiritual problems (Mark 9:29). Fasting adds a sense of urgency to your prayers. When everything you tried has failed and you feel as though God is nowhere to be found, try fasting and praying. See my article on fasting for a more detailed analysis.

BE RIGHTEOUS

God is not a respecter of persons, however that does not mean he treats every prayer equally. Some people's prayers are more important to God than others. "Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:14,15). If someone's life is not pleasing to God, it is even possible that his prayer could become sin (Psalm 109:7). The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. This does not apply if the person praying is not righteous. Peter told men to treat their wives with understanding, so that their prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7). We must rid our lives of unforgiveness and unconfessed sin in order for our prayers to be effective.

Oftentimes when we need prayer, we look for someone who is really "anointed" to pray for us. Our hope is this anointed person would lay hands on us, pray for us and that God will somehow magically answer him.

Suppose you are a parent and your older child asks you for ice cream. You say no. Then 5 minutes later, your younger child comes and asks for ice cream. Wouldn't it be obvious to you that the older one told the younger one to ask, hoping you would change your answer? Why do we attempt these silly strategies on God? If God has not been answering

your prayer, then you should focus on WHY God isn't answering, rather than hoping He would answer if someone else prays.

Further, there is not one shred of scriptural evidence that God cares how anointed you are when answering prayer. There is no gift of the Spirit called the ability to get God to say yes when He already said no. No one has this gift. God values the prayer of the righteous, not the "anointed". James 5:16 does not say the effective fervent prayer of an anointed man avails much. Elijah was a regular guy, but he was righteous and that's why God heard him, that's why God anointed him. There is a subtle difference.

Having said that, certain people do have special giftings, and if they are genuinely of God, they may shed insight into why we are going through trials. Here is a test you can use. If a "prophet" tells you your ~~fortune~~, I mean future, but does not tell you how to live righteous before God, then he is probably not a true prophet. If an apostle is more interested in how much money you can give him rather than apostling you (or whatever apostles do), then go to someone else.

USE GOD'S WORD

You could probably tell by now that I am not a fan of the decree and declare doctrine. However, there is a time and place for quoting scripture. Jesus quoted scriptures to resist the devil during his 40 day fast. The sword of the Spirit (the word of God) is one of our weapons of warfare(Ephesians 6:17).

Should we pray for the sick to be healed, or just speak the word? We often wonder about these things. The answer is both. Look at how Jesus prayed in John 11:41-43:

41 And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.”

43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”

Lazarus was sick, and Jesus deliberately delayed and waited for him to die so he could raise him from the dead. So Jesus was very clear on what was going to happen. Yet when Jesus reached Bethany, he was so overcome with emotion that he wept (John 11:35). Also when it came time to raise Lazarus, Jesus first prayed to the Father – it was almost as if Jesus was trying to plead his case. Then when he was finished praying, he spoke the words for Lazarus to be raised.

There is a time and place for speaking the word of God. Mark 11:23 tells us to speak to our mountains. The problem with decree and declare is that people are just speaking anything they want. Jesus first prayed to the Father, then he spoke. If you speak something that is not God’s will, you are wasting your breath.

Jesus used the word of God to resist the devil’s temptations in the wilderness. During times of trials, the devil may put thoughts in our mind and cause us to think that God has forsaken us. A Christian who is skillful in God’s word would quote the scriptures like Jesus did, “It may look as though the devil is calling the shots in my life, but the Bible says that my God will never leave me nor forsake me, and greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world!” etc. This is so different from “I rebuke you devil. I bind the spirit of this. I bind the spirit of that. I loose the blessings on Abraham. I cast you out in Jesus’ name. I decree and declare that I am the head.” Oh give me a break. Instead, why not pray the way Jesus and Paul prayed?

Conclusion

Prayer has been given a bad name by a lot of people who classify themselves as "prayer warriors". As a result, many Christians feel that they can't pray for themselves. It's not because they can't do what the Bible teaches, but because they can't pray like Sister So and So does. I have outlined a number of things that constitute violent prayer, and you will find it is something that any Christian can do, even a child. I urge you to put in practice some of the scriptural points I have outlined above. Add them to your regular prayer routine. It is this kind of violent prayer that is sometimes needed to take the kingdom by force, and move God.

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