

HOLY VIOLENCE

“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

WHEN John the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea, the throng of people who pressed around him became extremely violent to get near enough to hear his voice. Often when our Savior preached did the like scene occur. We find that the multitudes were immense beyond all precedent. He seemed to drain every city, every town and every village as He went along preaching the Word of the Gospel. These people, moreover, not like our common Church and Chapelgoers—content to hear, if they could, and yet more content to keep without hearing, if it were possible—were extremely earnest to get near enough to hear Jesus. So intense was their desire to hear the Savior that they pressed upon Him, insomuch that they trod one upon another. The crowd became so violent to approach Him, that some of the weaker ones were cast down and trod upon.

Now, our Savior, when He witnessed all this struggling round about to get near Him, said, “This is just a picture of what is done spiritually by those who will be saved. As you press and throng about Me,” said Christ, “and thrust one another with arm and elbow, to get within reach of My voice, even so must it be if you would be saved, ‘For the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.’” He pictured to Himself a crowd of souls desiring to get to the living Savior. He saw them press and crowd and throng and thrust and tread on one another, in their anxious desire to get at Him. He warned His hearers that unless they had this earnestness in their souls, they would never reach Him savingly. But if they had it, they should certainly be saved. “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.”

“But,” says one, “do you wish us to understand that if a man is to be saved he must use violence and vehement earnestness in order to obtain salvation?” I do, most assuredly. That is the doctrine of the text. “But,” says one, “I thought it was all the work of God.” So it is, from first to last. But when God has begun the work in the soul, the constant effect of God’s work in us is to set us working. And where God’s Spirit is really striving with us, we shall begin to strive, too. This is just a test whereby we may distinguish the men who have received the Spirit of God from those who have not received it. Those who have received the Spirit in verity and truth are violent men. They have a violent anxiety to be saved and they violently strive that they may enter in at the strait gate. Well they know that seeking to enter in is not enough, for many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able and therefore do they strive with might and main.

I shall this morning, first, direct your attention to these violent men. Look at them. Secondly, we shall show their conduct. What makes them so violent? Are they justified in this impetuous vehemence? We shall next rejoice in the fact that they are sure to be successful in their violence. And then I shall endeavor to arouse in your hearts, by the help of God’s Holy Spirit, that holy violence, without which the gates of Heaven will be shut in your teeth and you will never be able to enter the pearly portals of Paradise.

1. First then, LET US LOOK AT THESE VIOLENT MEN. Understand that what they are they have been made by Divine Grace. They are not naturally so of themselves. But there has been a secret work of grace in them and then they have become violent men. Look at these violent men who are violently in earnest to be saved. You will observe them when they come up to the House of God. There is no yawning with them, no listlessness or inattention, no imagination that if they do but sit in the place the hour-and-a-half which is regularly allotted to Divine worship, they will have done enough. No. They hear with

both their ears and they look with both their eyes and all through the service they have an intense desire that they may find Christ.

Meet them as they go up to the House of Prayer and ask them why they are going there. They know right well what they are going after. "I am going there to find mercy and to find peace and rest to my soul. For I am in anguish about sin and I want to find the Savior. I am in hopes that being in the way the Lord will meet with me, so I am about to lay myself down by the side of the pool of Bethesda, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will stir the pool and enable me to step in." You do not find these people like the most of modern hearers, critical, or else careless. No. They are all awake to see whether there is not something to be had which may be a balm to their wearied spirits and a cordial to their troubled breasts.

Mark these violent people after they have gone home. They go to their chambers and they begin to pray. Not that prayer between sleeping and waking that some of you are used to attend to—not that drowsy supplication which never gets beyond the ceiling of your bedroom. But they fall on their knees and with a holy anxiety they begin to cry, "Lord, save or I perish! O Lord save me. I am ready to perish, Lord. I beseech You, stretch out Your hand and rescue my poor soul from that destruction which now haunts my spirit." And see them after they have prayed, how they turn over the Word of God. They do not read its chapters as if the mere looking at the letters was enough, but they read just as Watts says in his hymn—

*"Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,
Whose hope, still hovering round Your Word
Would light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure support against despair."*

And down they are on their knees again. "O Lord speak to my soul through Your Word! Lord help me to lay hold on the promise, enable me to grasp it! Oh, let not my soul perish for lack of Your help and Your Grace." And then see these violent men whom God has made in earnest about being saved. You will not find them leaving their devotions in their closets, or in their House of Prayer. Wherever they go there is a solemn earnestness upon them which the world cannot understand. They are seeking after Jesus and rest they neither will nor can until they find Him. Their nights are disturbed with dreams and their days are made sad with their partings after the blessing—without which they cannot live and without which they dare not die.

My Hearer, have you ever been one of these violent men, or are you so now? Blessed be God if this holy violence is in your spirit—you shall take Heaven by force yet—you shall take it by storm and carry the gates of Heaven by the battery of your prayers. Only persevere with importunity. Plead, wrestle, continue to strive and you must at length prevail. But ah, my Hearer, if you have never had a strong unconquerable anxiety about your soul, you are as yet a stranger to the things of God. You do not understand that violence victorious without which the gates of Heaven never can be stormed. Some of us can look back to the time when we were seeking Christ. I could myself awake of a morning easily then. The first ray of light that came into my chamber would awaken me to take up Baxter's Call to the Unconverted that lay under my pillow. I believed I had not repented enough and I began to read that. Oh, how I hoped that would break my heart. And then I would get Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul and Allen's Alarm and read them.

But, still, I think I might have read them to this day and not been a whit the better if I had not something better than alarm, in remembering that Christ came into the world to save every sinner who was willing to cast himself upon His blood and righteousness and take him at His Word and trust God. Have you not seen many—and are there not many among us—men who have said "I must have mercy, I must have it—it is not a thing which I may have, or may not have but I am a lost soul if I have it not"? And when they have gone to pray they have seemed like Samsons, they have got hold of the two posts of Heaven's gate of mercy and they have pulled as if they would pull them up by their eternal roots sooner than not get the blessing. They have hammered at the gates of Heaven until it seemed as if they would split the golden bolts rather than be turned away. No man ever gets peace until he gets into such a passion of earnestness to be saved that he cannot

find peace until Christ speaks pardon to his soul and brings him into life and liberty. "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force."

But this violence does not end when a man finds Christ. It then begins to exercise itself in another way. The man who is pardoned and who knows it, then becomes violently in love with Christ. He does not love Him just a little, but he loves Him with all his soul and all his might. He feels as if he could wish to die for Christ and his heart pants to be able to live alone with his Redeemer and serve Him without interruption. Mark such a man who is a true Christian. Mark his prayers and they are violently sincere, violently earnest. Mark him when he preaches—there is no dull droning out of a monotonous discourse—he speaks like a man who means what he says and who must speak it, or else woe would be unto him if he preached not the Gospel.

As I look around on many of the Churches, yes, on many members of my own Church, I am apt to fear that they are not God's children at all, because they have nothing of this holy violence. Have you ever read Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*? I dare say you have thought it one of the strongest imaginations ever put together, especially that part where the old mariner represents the corpses of all the dead men rising up—all of them dead, yet rising up to manage the ship. Dead men pulling the ropes, dead men steering, dead men spreading the sails. I thought what a strange idea that was. But do you know I have lived to see that true—I have seen it done. I have gone into Churches and I have seen a dead man in the pulpit and a dead man as a deacon and a dead man holding the plate at the door and dead men sitting to hear. You say, "Strange!" but I have. I have gone into societies and I have seen it all going on so regularly. These dead men, you know, never overstep the bounds of prudence—not they—they have not life enough to do that. They always pull the rope orderly, "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen."

And the dead man in the pulpit, is he not most regular and precise? He systematically draws his handkerchief from his pocket and uses it at the regular period, in the middle of the sermon. He would not think of violating a single rubric that has been laid down by his old-fashioned Church. Well, I have seen these Churches—I know where to point them out—and have seen dead men doing everything. "No," says one, "you can't mean it?" Yes, I do, the men were spiritually dead. I have seen the minister preaching without a particle of life, a sermon which is only fresh in the sense in which a fish is fresh when it has been packed in ice. I have seen the people sit and they have listened as if they had been a group of statues—the chiseled marble would have been as much affected by the sermon as they. I have seen the deacons go about their business just as orderly and with as much precision as if they had been mere automatons and not men with hearts and souls at all. Do you think God will ever bless a Church that is like that? Are we ever to take the kingdom of Heaven with a troop of dead men? Never! We want living ministers, living hearers, living deacons, living elders and until we have such men who have got the very fire of life burning in their souls, who have got tongues of life and eyes of life and souls of life, we shall never see the kingdom of Heaven taken by storm. "For the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force."

Frequently complaints are made and surprise expressed by individuals who have never found a blessing rest upon anything they have attempted to do in the service of God. "I have been a Sunday-School teacher for years," says one, "and I have never seen any of my girls or boys converted." No, and the reason most likely is you have never been violent about it. You have never been compelled by the Divine Spirit to make up your mind that converted they should be and no stone should be left unturned until they were. You have never been brought by the Spirit to such a passion that you have said, "I cannot live unless God bless me. I cannot exist unless I see some of these children saved." Then, falling on your knees in agony of prayer and putting forth afterwards your trust with the same intensity towards Heaven, you would never have been disappointed, "for the violent take it by force."

And you, too, my Brother in the Gospel, you have marveled and wondered why you have not seen souls regenerated. Did you ever expect it? Why, you preach like one who does not believe what he is saying. Those who believe in Christ may say of you with kind partiality, "Our minister is a dear good man." But the careless young men that attend your ministry, say, "Does that man expect to make me believe that which he only utters as a dry story and to convince me when I see him go

through the service with all the dullness and monotony of dead routine?" Oh, my Brethren, what we want today in the Churches is violence, not violence against each other, but violence against death and Hell—against the hardness of other men's hearts and against the sleepiness of our own. In Martin Luther's time, truly the kingdom of Heaven suffered violence. The whole religious world was wide awake, Now, I fear for the most part it is sound asleep. Go where you may, our Churches have come to be old established businesses. They do not care to extend themselves.

We must have new blood, no—we must have new fire from Heaven to fall upon the sacrifice or else like Baal's priests, they may cut and hack our bodies and distract our minds in vain. There will be "no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regard." The sacrifice shall lay unburnt upon the altar and the world will say our God is not the living God, or surely we are not His people. "And you shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness and you shall not prosper in your ways—and you shall be only oppressed and spoiled evermore and no man shall save you." Violent men, then, are those that take the kingdom of Heaven by force.

II. Now, BRING THESE VIOLENT MEN FORWARD, AND LET US ASK THEM WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT. When a man is very earnest, he ought to be ready to give a reason for his earnestness. "Sirs, what is all this strife about? Why all this earnestness? You seem to be boiling over with enthusiasm. What is up? Is there anything that is worth making such a stir about?" Hear them and they will soon convince you that all their enthusiasm and striving to enter the kingdom of Heaven by force is not a whit more strong than reasonable.

The first reason why poor sinners take the kingdom of Heaven by force is because they feel they have no natural right to it. And, therefore, they must take it by force if they would get it at all. When a man belongs to the House of Lords and knows that he has got a seat there by prescriptive right and title, he does not trouble himself at the time of the elections. But there is another man, who says, "WELL, I should like a seat in the House of Commons, but I have no absolute right to it. If I get it, it will be by a desperate struggle." Do you not see how busy he is on the day! How the carriages fly about everywhere? And how earnest are his supporters that he may stand at the head of the poll and win the day? He says, "I have no absolute right to it. If I had, then I would just take it easy and walk into my seat at the proper time." But now he labors and strives and wrestles, because without so doing he does not expect to succeed.

Now, look at those who are saved. They have no right to the inheritance they are seeking. What are they? Sinners, the chief of sinners. In their own esteem the vilest of the vile. Now, if they would get Heaven they must take it by force, for they have no right to it by birth or lineal entail. And what else are they? They are the poor ones of this earth. There stands the rabbi at the gate and he says, "You can't come in here. This is no place for the poor to enter." "But," says he, "I will." And pushing the rabbi aside, he takes it by force. Then, again, they were Gentiles, too. And Jews stood at the gate and said, "Stand back, you Gentile dogs, you cannot come in." Now, if such would be saved, they must take the kingdom of Heaven by storm for they have no rights to assert. Ah, my fellow men, if you sit down and fold your arms and say, "I am so good I have a right to Heaven"—how deceived you will be. But if God has convinced you of your lost, ruined and undone condition and if He has put His quickening Spirit within you, you will use a bold and desperate violence to force your way into the kingdom of Heaven. The Spirit of God will not lead you to be insincere in the presence of foes, or fainthearted in the overwhelming crisis. He will drive you to desperate labor that you may be saved.

Ask one such man, again, why is he so violent in prayer. He replies, "Ah, I know the value of the mercy I receive. Why, I am asking for pardon, for Heaven, for eternal life and am I to get these with a few yawns and sleepy prayers? I am asking that I may wear the white robe and sing the never-ending song of praise. And do you think that a few poor supplications are to be enough? No, my God, if You would make me tarry a hundred years and sigh and groan and cry through that long century—yes, if I might but have Heaven at last, all my prayers would have been well spent—no, had they been a thousand times as many, they were well rewarded if You would hear me at last. But," says he again, "if you want to know why I am so earnest, let me tell you it is because I cannot bear to be lost forever."

Hear the earnest sinner when he speaks. You say to him, "Why so earnest?" The tear is in his eye, the flush is on his cheek, there is emotion in every feature, while he says, "Would to God I could be far more earnest. Do you know I am a lost soul, perhaps before another hour is over I may be shut up in the hopeless fires of Hell! Oh, God, have mercy on me, for if You do not, how terrible is my fate. I shall be lost—lost forever!"

Once let a man know that Hell is beneath his feet and if that does not make him earnest, what will? No wonder that his prayers are importunate, that his endeavors are intensely earnest—when he knows that he must escape, or else the devouring fire will lay hold on him. Suppose now you had been a Jew in the olden time and one day while taking a walk in the fields you had seen a man running with all his might. "Stop!" you say, "stop! My dear Friend, you will exhaust yourself." He goes on and on, with all his might. You run after him. "Pause awhile," you say, "and rest. The grass is soft, sit down here and take your ease. See, here I have some food and a bottle. Stop and refresh yourself." But without saluting you he says, "No, I must away, away, away." "Why? Why?" you say. He is gone so far ahead, you run after him with all your might. And scarcely able to turn his head, he exclaims, "The city of refuge! The city of refuge! The manslayer is behind me." Now, it is all accounted, for you do not wonder that he runs with all his might, now. When the manslayer is after him, you can well understand that he would never pause for rest until he has found the city of refuge. So let a man know that the devil is behind him, that the avenging Law of God is pursuing him and who can make him stop? Who shall endeavor to make him stay his race until he enters Christ, the City of Refuge and finds himself secure? This will make a man earnest indeed to dread "the wrath to come," and to be laboring to escape from there.

Another reason why every man who would be safe must be in earnest and be violent is this—there are so many adversaries to oppose us—that if we are not violent we shall never be able to overcome them. Do you remember that beautiful parable in John Bunyan's Pilgrim? "I saw also, that the Interpreter took him by the hand and led him into a pleasant place, where was built a stately palace, beautiful to behold—at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. Then said Christian, 'May we go in there?' Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace. And behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but dare not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table, with a book and his ink-horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein. He saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armor to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat amazed.

"At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, 'Set down my name, Sir;' the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword and put a helmet upon his head and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force, but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, (Matt. 11:12; Acts 14:22), he cut his way through them all and pressed forward into the palace, at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying—

*'Come in, come in,
Eternal glory you shall win.'*

So he went in and was clothed with such garments as they. "And surely the dreamer saw the Truth of God in his dream It is even so. If we would win eternal glory we must fight—

*"Sure we must fight, if we would reign,
Increase our courage, Lord!"*

You have enemies within you, enemies without, enemies beneath, enemies on every side—the world, the flesh and the devil. And if the Spirit of God has quickened you, He has made a soldier

of you and you can never sheathe your sword till you gain the victory. The man who would be saved must be violent, because of the opposition he has to encounter.

But do you still condemn this man and say that he is an enthusiast and a fanatic? Then God Himself comes forth to vindicate His despised servant. Know that this is the sign, the mark of distinction between the true child of God and the bastard-professor. The men who are not God's children are a careless, stumbling, coldhearted race. But the men that are God's in sincerity and truth, are burning as well as shining lights. They are as brilliant constellations in the firmament of Heaven, burning stars of God. Of all things in the world, God hates most the man that is neither hot nor cold. Better have no religion than have a little—better to be altogether without it—enemies to it, than to have just enough to make you respectable but not enough to make you earnest. What does God say concerning the religion of this day? “So then because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of My mouth.” Lukewarmness, of all things, God abhors and yet of all things it is the predominant mark of the present day.

The time of the Methodists, of Whitfield and Wesley, was a time indeed of fire and of Divine violence and vigor. But we have gradually cooled down, now, into a delightful consistency and though here and there, there is a little breaking out of the old desperado spirit of the Christian religion, yet for the most part, the world has so mesmerized the Church that she is as nearly asleep as she can be. And much of her teaching and much of the doings of her religious societies is sheer sleepwalking. It is not the wide-awake earnestness of them that walk with their eyes open. They walk in their sleep—very nimbly they walk, too, and very nicely they “trim their way.” But very little is there of the life of God in anything they do and very little of Divine success attending their agencies, because they are not violent with regard to the matters of the kingdom of God.

III. Having thus endeavored to screen the violent men from harsh criticism, I shall now invite you for a moment to reflect that **THE VIOLENT MAN IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL**. Do you think you are going to be carried to Heaven on a feather bed? Have you got a notion in your heads that the road to Paradise is all a lawn with the grass smoothly mown, fancy. The way to Heaven is up hill and down hill. Up hill with difficulty, down hill with trials. It is through fire and through water, through flood and through flame, by the lions and by the leopards. Through the very mouths of dragons is the path to Paradise. But the man who finds it so and who desperately resolves in the strength of God to tread that path—no, who does not resolve as if he could do nothing else but resolve, and who feels driven, as if with a hurricane behind him, to go into the right road—this man is never unsuccessful—never!

Where God has given a violent anxiety for salvation he never disappoints it. No soul that has ever cried for it with a violent cry has been disappointed. From the beginning of creation until now there has never been raised to the Throne of God a violent and earnest prayer which missed its answer. Go, Soul, in the strong confidence that if you go earnestly you go successfully. God may sooner deny Himself than deny the request of an earnest man. Our God may sooner cease to be “the Lord God, gracious and merciful,” than cease to bless the men who seek the gates of Heaven with the violence of faith and prayer. Oh, reflect that all the saints above have been led by Divine Grace to wrestle hard as we do now with sins and doubts and fears. They had no smooth path to Glory. They had to dispute every inch of the way at the sword's point. So must you—and as surely as you are enabled to do so, so surely will you conquer. Only the violent are saved and all the violent are saved. When God makes a man violent after salvation, that man cannot perish. The gates of Heaven may sooner be unhinged than that man be robbed of the prize for which he has fought.

IV. And, now I have to close, for I find my voice fails me this morning, when most I need it. I have to close abruptly by endeavoring earnestly **TO EXCITE EACH OF YOU TO A VIOLENCE AFTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**. In this great crowd there is surely some of the class I am about to describe. There is one man here who says, “I don't know that I have done much amiss in my life—I am about as regular a man as there is living. Don't I attend a place of worship regularly? I believe that I shall most certainly be saved. But I don't take much trouble about it, it never disquiets me particularly. I don't like”—says this man—“that intrusive land of religion that always seems to be thrusting itself in everybody's way. I think it is quite right that people should go to their place of

worship, but why take any further trouble? I just believe that I shall fare as other people fare. I am a steady, unpretending sort of man and I have no reason to doubt that I shall be saved.”

Ah, Friend, you have never seen the gate of Heaven. It is obvious that you have never seen it, or else you would know better. For at the gate of Heaven multitudes are struggling—the gates of Heaven are thronged and he that would enter there must press and elbow and push—or he may go away certain that he can never enter. No, your easy religion will just bring you in too late. It may carry you nine miles out of ten. But what is the good of that to a man who must perish unless he is carried the whole way?

It will go a good way with you when you follow the counsels of a Gospel ministry with outward propriety, but at the bar of God it will utterly fail you—when you lack the inward witness of strong crying and supplications. No, an easy religion is the way to Hell—it is not the way to Heaven. Let your soul alone and you need not expect much good fruit to come of it, any more than a farmer who leaves his fields alone, need expect to reap a harvest. Your religion is vain and futile if that is all. “Ah” cries another “but I am in quite a different case. I am a sinner so vile, Sir, that I know I never can be saved, therefore, what is the use? I never think about it now, except with blank despair. Have I not long rebelled against God—will He ever pardon me? No, no. Don’t exhort me to try. I may as well take my full swing of pleasure while I am here, for I feel I never shall enjoy the pleasures of Heaven hereafter.”

Stop Friend, “The violent take it by force.” If the Lord has taught you your utter sinfulness, go and try. Say—

*“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.”*

Go home, go to your closet, fall on your knees, put your trust alone in Christ and, my Friend, if the Lord does not have mercy upon you, then He is not the God we have preached to you and He has not substantiated His faithful promise—you cannot—you shall not seek in vain. But mark, you must not think that your once seeking is enough—continue in it. If God has given you His Spirit you will continue—you will never leave off praying until you get the answer. Oh, my Friend if God has given you this day a longing after His love—if He has caused you to say, “I will never give it up, I will perish at the foot of the Cross if I perish at all.” You can no more perish than the angels in Paradise. Be of good

And then, let each one of us, as we retire, and if we have tasted that the Lord is precious, determine to love Him more earnestly than before. I never leave my pulpit without feeling ashamed of myself. I do not remember a time when I have been able to go home without being suffused with humiliation and cast down with self-reproach because I had not been more earnest. I very seldom flog myself for using an ugly word, or anything of that sort. It is for not having been earnest enough about the salvation of men. When I sit down, I begin to think of this vast stream of people being swept along towards the gulf of eternity—bound for Heaven or Hell and I wonder how it is that I do not weep all the time I am here—why it is that I do not find red-hot burning words with which to address you? I find fault with others sometimes but far more with myself in this matter. Oh, how is it that a man can be God’s ambassador and yet have so callous, so insensitive a heart, as many of us have in this work? Oh, how is it that we tell the tale of death and life, of Heaven and Hell, of Christ crucified and His Gospel despised, so quietly as we do?

Condemn not the minister for excitement or fanaticism—condemn him because he is not half in earnest as he ought to be. Oh my God! Impress me, I beseech You, more with the value of souls and then impress my Hearers, also, with the value of their own souls. Are you not going today, many of you, post-haste to perdition? Is it not a fact that your conscience tells you that many of you are enemies to God? You are without Christ, you have never been washed in His blood—never

been forgiven. Oh, my Hearers, if you continue as you are, a few more rising suns and then your sun must set forever. Only a few more Sundays have you to waste, a few more sermons have you to hear and the pit of Hell must open wide its jaws—and then where are you?

But a few more days and the heavens shall be rent and Christ shall come to judge the earth and Sinner, where are you? Oh, I beseech you now by the living God and by His Son, Jesus Christ, think of your state! Repent of your sins—turn to God! Oh Spirit of God, turn, I pray You, turn the hearts of sinners now! Remember, if you now repent, if you now confess your sins, Christ is preached to you. He came into the world to save sinners. Oh, believe on Him! Throw yourselves before His Cross. Trust in His blood. Rely on His righteousness—

*“But if your ears refuse
The language of His Grace
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord, in vengeance dressed,
Will lift His hand and swear,
‘You that despise My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there.’”*

Oh, if I had the tongue of Whitfield, or the mouth of an archangel! If I could speak like a cherubim, I would pour out my heart before you and pray in Christ’s stead, that you would be reconciled to God. I must face you soon before God’s great bar and shall your blood be laid to my door? Shall you perish and must I perish with you for unfaithfulness? May God forbid it!

Now may He—

*“Let you see your lost estate,
And save you before it is too late,
Wake you to righteousness.”*

The Lord have mercy upon you all for Jesus' sake! Amen.