

Reformation Series 2009
(Lecture Four: Thomas Watson)

V. Thomas Watson.

A. Biography.

1. Background and education.

a. Though it is not known for certain, Thomas Watson was probably born in Yorkshire, around 1620.

b. He was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, earning a Bachelor of Arts in 1639 and a Master of Arts in 1642.

(i) “He had the happiness to be educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which in those days deserved to be called the School of Saints, the nursing mother of gigantic evangelical divines. In Kennet’s ‘Register and Chronicle,’ is a list of eighty-seven names of Puritan ministers, including many well-known and loved as preachers and commentators; such as Anthony Burgess, William Jenkyn, Ralph Venning, Thomas Brooks, Thomas White, Samuel Slater, Thomas Watson, John Rowe, Dr. William Bates, Stephen Charnock, Samuel Clarke, Nathaniel Vincent, Dr. John Collings, William Bridge, Samuel Hildersam, Adoniram Bifield, followed by this remark, ‘These are most of them mentioned in the list of sufferers for Nonconformity, and appear upon the registers to have been all of Emmanuel College, beside great numbers, no doubt of the same society, who were forward preachers up of the unhappy changes of 1641,’ etc. In the margin of the book is the following observation on the foregoing: ‘It may not be improper to observe how much young students, in both Universities, fell in with the prejudices of their governors and tutors. This was the reason that this single College of Emmanuel, in Cambridge, bred more of the Puritans and Nonconformists than perhaps any seven of the other Colleges or Halls in either University.’ Such a fact as this should attract the prayers of all believers to our seminaries for the sons of the prophets, since upon the manner in which these institutions are conducted will depend under God the future well-being of our churches.”

(ii) “We are not at all surprised to learn that Thomas Watson enjoyed the repute, while at Cambridge, of being a most laborious student; the great Puritanic authors must have been most industrious workers at the university, or they never would have become such pre-eminent masters in Israel. The conscientious student is the most likely man to become a successful preacher” (Spurgeon).

2. Ministry.

a. In 1646, Watson went to St. Stephen’s, Walbrook, London, where he served as a lecturer for about ten years, and then as rector for another six, taking the place of Ralph Robinson. “After completing his course with honour, Watson became rector of St Stephen’s, Walbrook, where in the very heart of London he executed for nearly sixteen years the office of a faithful pastor with great diligence and assiduity. Happy were the citizens who regularly attended so instructive and spiritual a ministry. The

church was constantly filled, for the fame and popularity of the preacher were deservedly great. Going in and out among his flock, fired with holy zeal for their eternal welfare, his years rolled on pleasantly enough amid the growing respect of all who knew him. Calamy, in his Nonconformist Memorial, says of him: - 'He was so well known in the city for his piety and usefulness, that though he was singled out by the Friendly Debate, he yet carried a general respect from all sober persons along with him to his grave. He was a man of considerable learning, a popular, but judicious preacher (if one may judge from his writings), and eminent in the gift of prayer. Of this, the following anecdote is a sufficient proof. Once on a lecture day, before the Bartholomew Act took place, the learned Bishop Richardson came to hear him at St Stephen's, who was much pleased with his sermon, but especially with his prayer after it, so that he followed him home to give him thanks, and earnestly desired a copy of his prayer. "Alas!" (said Mr Watson) "that is what I cannot give, for I do not use to pen my prayers; it was no studied thing, but uttered, pro re nata [for the thing born, as needed], as God enabled me, from the abundance of my heart and affections." Upon which the good Bishop went away wondering that any man could pray in that manner extempore'" (Spurgeon).

- b. In about 1647, Watson married Abigail Beadle, the daughter of John Beadle, an Essex minister with Puritan convictions. She gave birth to at least seven children in the next thirteen years, four of them dying young.
- c. During the Civil War, Watson began to express his strong Presbyterian views. Nevertheless, he had sympathy for the king, and was one of the Presbyterian ministers who went to Oliver Cromwell to protest the execution of Charles I.
- d. Along with Christopher Love, William Jenkyn, and others, he was imprisoned in 1651 for his part in a plot to restore the monarchy by recalling Charles II. Watson and the others were released after petitioning for mercy, but Love was beheaded. Watson was reinstated to his pastorate in Walbrook in 1652.
- e. He gained fame and popularity as a preacher until the Restoration. But in 1662, when the Act of Uniformity was passed, Watson was ejected from his pastorate.
 - (i) "But the hand which of old had oppressed the church was again stretched forth to vex certain of the saints. The most learned, holy, and zealous of the clergy of the Church of England found that the Act of Uniformity would not allow them to preserve a clean conscience and retain their livings, and therefore they submitted to the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Thomas Watson did not hesitate as to the course he should pursue. He was not a factious hater of royalty, a red republican, or fifth monarchy-man; in fact, he had in Cromwell's day been all too loyal to the house of Stuart; he had protested against the execution of the King, and had joined in Love's plot for the bringing in of Charles II; yet all this availed nothing, he was a Puritan, and therefore must not be tolerated by the bitter spirits then dominant in the Establishment. What seeds of discord were sown on that black Bartholomew history has not had space to record . . ."
 - (ii) "With many tears and lamentations the congregation of St Stephen's saw their shepherd about to be removed from his flock, and with aching hearts they listened to his parting words. He himself speaking as one bereaved of his dearest delight, and yet suffering joyfully the loss of all things, bade them adieu, and went forth 'not knowing whither he went.'"

- (iii) “In the collection of Farewell Sermons there are three by Mr. Watson, viz.: two delivered August 17th, and the third on the Tuesday following. The first, preached in the forenoon, is on John 13: 34. ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.’ It discovers much of the spirit of the gospel, particularly in recommending love to enemies and persecutors. The second, preached in the afternoon, is on 2 Corinthians 7: 1. ‘Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’ In the former part of it, he insists largely on ‘the ardent affections of a right gospel minister towards his people.’ This head he closes thus: ‘I have now exercised my ministry among you for almost sixteen years; and I rejoice and bless God that I cannot say, the more I love you, the less I am loved: I have received many signal demonstrations of love from you. Though other parishes have exceeded you in number of houses, yet, I think, none for strength of affection. I have with much comfort observed your reverent attention to the word preached; you rejoice in this light, not for a season, but to this day. I have observed your zeal against error in a critical time, your unity and amity. This is your honour. If there should be any interruption in my ministry among you, though I should not be permitted to preach to you again, yet I shall not cease to love you, and to pray for you. But why should there be any interruption made? Where is the crime? Some, indeed, say that we are disloyal and seditious. Beloved, what my actions and sufferings for his Majesty have been is known to not a few of you. However, we must go to heaven through good report and bad report; and it is well if we can get to glory, though we press through the pikes. I shall endeavour that I may still approve the sincerity of my love to you. I will not promise that I shall still preach among you, nor will I say that I shall not. I desire to be guided by the silver thread of God’s word and providence. My heart is towards you. There is, you know, an expression in the late Act, “that we shall now shortly be as if we were naturally dead;” and if I must die, let me leave some legacy with you.’ Then follow twenty admirable directions, well worthy the fervent perusal of every Christian. He closes them thus: ‘I beseech you treasure them up as so many jewels in the cabinet of your breasts. Did you carry them about you, they would be an antidote to keep you from sin, and a means to preserve the zeal of piety flaming upon the altar of your hearts. I have many things yet to say to you, but I know not whether God will give another opportunity. My strength is now almost gone. I beseech you, let these things make deep impressions on all your souls. Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.’”
- (iv) “The last discourse, August 19th, is on Isaiah 3: 10, 11. ‘Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him’” (Spurgeon).

- f. He continued to preach in private meetings – in barns, homes, and the woods – as he had opportunity. “After his ejection, Watson preached occasionally whenever he could do so with safety. Fines and imprisonments were insufficient to close the

mouths of the witnesses of Jesus. In barns, kitchens, outhouses, or dells and woods, the faithful few gathered to hear the message of eternal life” (Spurgeon).

- g. In 1666, after the Great Fire of London, Watson prepared a large room for public worship, welcoming all who came.
- i. After the Declaration of Indulgence took effect in 1672, Watson was able to obtain a license for Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate, which belonged to Sir John Langham, a patron of non-conformists.
 - (i) Watson preached there for three years before he was joined by Stephen Charnock. They continued to minister together until Charnock died in 1680.
 - (ii) “After the great fire in 1666, when the churches were burned, Mr Watson and several other Nonconformists fitted up large rooms for those who had an inclination to attend. Upon the Indulgence, in 1672, he licensed the great hall in Crosby House, on the east side of Bishopsgatestreet, then belonging to Sir John Langham (a Nonconformist). It was a happy circumstance that the worthy baronet favoured the cause of Nonconformity, and that so noble a chamber was at his disposal. Here Watson preached for several years. Rev. Stephen Charnock, B.D., became joint pastor with him at Crosby Hall in 1675, and continued so till his death in 1680. What two shepherds for the flock! Men of such most extraordinary gifts and graces were seldom if ever united in one pastorate. They both attempted a Body of Divinity, and the goodly volume on the Divine Attributes was Charnock’s first stone of a colossal structure which he was not spared to complete. Our author was more modest in his attempt and the present volume shows how he succeeded” (Spurgeon).
- j. Watson continued to labor until failing health forced him to retire to Barnston, Essex, where he suddenly died in 1686 while praying privately (Beeke). He was buried on July 28, in the same grave as his father-in-law who served as a minister at Barnston.

3. Works in print:

- a. *All Things for Good*, formerly titled *A Divine Cordial*, in which he explains how our best and worst situations work for our good.
- b. *The Art of Divine Contentment*, which is on the same subject as *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. “Based on Philippians 4:11, ‘I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content,’ Watson writes, ‘For my part, I know not any ornament in religion that doth more bespangle a Christian, or glitter in the eye of God and man, than this of contentment. Nor certainly is there any thing wherein all the Christian virtues do work more harmoniously, or shine more transparently, than in this orb. If there is a blessed life before we come to heaven, it is the contented life’” (Beeke).
- c. *The Beatitudes*, which is an exposition and application of the Beatitudes.
- d. *A Body of Divinity*: His magnum opus and most famous work, containing 176 sermons on the essential teachings of Christianity based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism.
- e. *The Duty of Self-Denial*. “Watson teaches that ‘self-denial is the first principle of Christianity.’ He describes what self-denial is, then demonstrates the Christ-asserting nature of every self-denying act.”

- f. *The Godly Man's Picture*. "After explaining the nature of godliness, Watson describes twenty-four marks of a godly man, including 'moved by faith,' 'fired with love,' 'prizes Christ,' 'loves the Word,' 'is humble,' 'is patient,' and 'loves the saints.' The concluding chapters offer helps to godliness, advice on how to persevere in godliness, counsel and comfort for the godly, and teaching on the mystical union between Christ and His people" (Beeke).
- g. *Gleanings from Thomas Watson*: a book of quotations. Here are a few samples: "He who is ashamed of Christ is a shame to Christ." "Worldly sorrows hasten our funerals." "They that bear the cross patiently shall wear the crown triumphantly."
- h. *Heaven Taken by Storm*: a manual on how to use the means of grace.
- i. Beeke writes, "Watson's depth of doctrine, clarity of expression, warmth of spirituality, love of application, and gift of illustration enhanced his reputation as a preacher and writer. His books are still widely read today."
- j. And Spurgeon writes, "Watson was one of the most concise, racy, illustrative, and suggestive of those eminent divines who made the Puritan age the Augustan period of evangelical literature. There is a happy union of sound doctrine, heart-searching experience and practical wisdom throughout all his works, and his Body of Divinity is, beyond all the rest, useful to the student and the minister. Although Thomas Watson issued several most valuable books, comparatively little is known of him . . . His writings are his best memorial" (Spurgeon).
- k. "In the life of Colonel James Gardiner, there is this remarkable account: 'In July, 1719, he had spent the evening, which was the Sabbath, in some gay company, and had an unhappy assignation with a married lady, whom he was to attend exactly at twelve. The company broke up about eleven, and he went into his chamber to kill the tedious hour. It happened that he took up a religious book, which his good mother or aunt had, without his knowledge, slipped into his portmanteau, called, 'The Christian Soldier,' written by Mr. Watson. Guessing by the title that he should find some phrases of his own profession spiritualised in a manner which might afford him some diversion, he resolved to dip into it: while this book was in his hand, an impression was made upon his mind, which drew after it a train of the most important consequences. Suddenly he thought he saw an unusual blaze of light fall on the book while he was reading, and lifting up his eyes, he apprehended, to his extreme amazement, that there was before him, as it were suspended in the air, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, surrounded with a glory, and was impressed as if a voice had come to him, to this effect: 'O sinner, did I suffer this for thee, and are these thy returns?' He sunk down in his chair, and continued for some time insensible. He then arose in a tumult of passions, and walked to and fro in his chamber, till he was ready to drop, in unutterable astonishment and agony of heart, which continued until the October following, when his terrors were turned into unutterable joy'" (Spurgeon, Preface to *Body of Divinity*).

B. Heaven Taken by Storm.

1. Watson's proposition is this: "*The right way to take heaven is by storm; or thus, none get into heaven but violent ones.* This violence concerns men as Christians. Though

heaven be given us freely, yet we must contend for it. We must not only put forth diligence, but a *holy violence*.”

- a. “We must be violent for the truth – the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the creation, the doctrine of free grace, justification by the blood of Christ, regeneration, resurrection of the dead, and the life of glory. These truths we must be violent for, which is either by being advocates for them or martyrs.
 - b. This holy violence is also when we are violent for our own salvation, 2 Peter 1:10. ‘Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.’
 - c. “The third thing is, what is implied in this holy violence? It implies three things:
 - (i) “*Resolution of the will*. Psalm 119:6. ‘I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.’ Whatever is in the way to heaven, (though there be a lion in the way) I will encounter it like a resolute commander that charges through the whole body of the army. I will have heaven whatever it costs me, and this resolution must be in the strength of Christ.
 - (ii) “*Vigor of the affections*. The will proceeds upon *reason*; the judgment being informed of the excellency of a state of glory and the will being resolved upon a voyage to that holy land, now the affections follow and they are on fire in passionate longings after heaven. The affections are violent things, Psalm 42:2. ‘My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.’”
 - (iii) “This violence implies *strength of endeavor*, when we strive for salvation as though a matter of life and death. It’s easy to talk of Heaven, but not to get to Heaven; we must put forth all our strength, and call in the help of heaven to this work.
 - (iv) “The fourth thing is, how many ways a Christian must offer violence: namely, four ways; He must offer violence, to himself, Satan, the world, and heaven.
2. “He must offer violence to *himself* – This self-violence consists in two things:
- a. Mortification of sin: Offering violence to one’s self, in a spiritual sense, consists in *mortification of sin*: Self is the *flesh*; this we must offer violence to. The flesh is a bosom traitor; it is like the Trojan horse within the walls which doth all the mischief. The embraces of the flesh are like the ivy embracing the oak; which sucks out the strength of it for its own leaves and berries: So the flesh by its soft embraces, sucks out of the heart all good, Gal. 5:17. *The flesh lusts against the spirit*. The pampering of the flesh, is the quenching of God’s spirit. The flesh chokes and stifles holy motions: the flesh sides with Satan and is true to its interest. There is a party within that will not pray, that will not believe. The flesh inclines us more to believe a temptation than a promise. The flesh is so near to us, its counsels are more attractive: no chain of adamant which binds so fast as the chain of lust. Alexander, who was . . . conqueror of the world, was . . . led captive by vice. Now a man must offer violence to his fleshly desires if he will be saved, Col. 3:5. ‘Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.’ The mortifying and killing sin at the root, is when we not only forbear the acts of sin, but hate the inbeing. How may one do to offer violence to himself in mortifying the flesh?
 - (i) “Withdraw the fuel that may make lust burn. Avoid all temptations. Take heed of that which doth nourish sin. They who pray that they may not be led into temptation, must not lead themselves into temptation.

- (ii) “Fight against fleshly lusts with spiritual weapons: faith and prayer. The best way to combat with sin is, upon our knees. Run to the promise, Rom. 6:14. ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you,’ or as the Greek word is, it shall not *lord* it.
- b. Provocation to duty: The second thing in offering violence to a man’s self consists, is, *in provocation to duty*. Then we offer holy violence to ourselves when we excite and provoke ourselves to that which is good. This is called in Scripture, a ‘stirring up ourselves to take hold of God’ Isa. 64:7. Consider,
- (i) “What absolute need there is to stir ourselves up to holy duties. . . . Our hearts are dull and heavy in the things of God, therefore we have need to spur them on and provoke them to that which is good. The flesh hinders from duty: when we would pray, the flesh resists; when we should suffer, the flesh draws back. How hard it is sometimes to get the consent of our hearts to seek God! Jesus Christ went more willingly to the cross than we do to the throne of grace. Had not we need then provoke ourselves to duty?
- (ii) “What it is to provoke ourselves to duty. It is to awaken ourselves, and shake off spiritual sloth. Christians, though they are raised from the death of sin, yet often they fall asleep.
- c. “The third thing is to show the several duties of Christianity, wherein we must provoke and offer violence to ourselves. I shall name seven.
- (i) “We must provoke ourselves to *reading of the word*. The noble Bereans did ‘search the Scriptures daily,’ Acts 17:11. Read the word as a book made by God Himself. Read the word as a perfect rule of faith; it contains all things essential to salvation. The word teaches us how to please God; how to order our conversation in the world. It instructs us in all things that belong either to prudence or piety.
- (a) “Would you know whether God is your God? Search the records of Scripture, 1 John 3:24. ‘Hereby we know that he abides in us.’ Would you know whether you are heirs of the promise? You must find it in these sacred writings. 2 Thes. 2:13. ‘He hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification.’
- (b) “Look upon the word as a spiritual magazine, out of which you fetch all your weapons to fight against sin and Satan. . . . The word fences off temptation. When the devil tempted Christ, he three times wounded the old serpent with the sword of the Spirit.
- (c) “Look upon the word as a spiritual glass to dress yourselves by. In other glasses you may see your faces; in this glass you may see your hearts, Psalm 119:104. ‘Through Thy precepts I get understanding.’
- (d) “Look upon the word as a book of spiritual cures. If you find yourselves dead in duty, here is a cure, Psalm 119:50. ‘Thy word hath quickened me.’ If you find your hearts hard, the word doth liquify and melt them; therefore it is compared to fire for its mollifying power, Jer. 23:29. If you are poisoned with sin, here is an herb to expel it.
- (e) Look upon the word as a sovereign elixir to comfort you in distress. It comforts you against all your sins, temptations, and afflictions. What are the promises but divine cordials to revive fainting souls.

- (f) “Read the word as the last Will and Testament of Christ. With what seriousness doth a child read over the will and testament of his father, that he may see what is left him.
- (g) “Read it as a book by which you must be judged: John 12:48. ‘The word that I have spoken shall judge him at the last day.’ They who live according to the rules of this book, shall be acquitted; they who live contrary to them, shall be condemned.
- (ii) “The second duty of religion wherein we must provoke ourselves, is, in *hearing of the word*. We may bring our bodies to the word with ease, but not our hearts without offering violence to ourselves. When we come to the word preached, we come to a business of the highest importance, therefore should stir up ourselves and hear with the greatest devotion.
- (a) “How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing, who scarce mind what is said, as if they were not at all concerned in the business: they come to church more for custom than conscience: Ezekiel 33:31. ‘They come to thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.’ If we could tell them of a rich purchase, or of some place of preferment, they would diligently attend; but when the word of life is preached, they disregard it.
- (b) “How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing, who come to the word in a dull, drowsy manner, as if they came to church to take a medicine to make them sleep. The word is to feed; it is strange to sleep at meat. The word judges men: it is strange for a prisoner to fall asleep at the bar. To such sleepy hearers God may say, *sleep on*. He may suffer them to be so stupefied, that no ordinance shall awaken them: Matt. 3:25. ‘While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares.’ The Devil is never asleep, but sows the tares of sin in a drowsy hearer.
- (c) “That we may, when we come to the word, offer violence to ourselves, and stir up ourselves to hear with devotion, consider,
- (1) “It is God that speaks to us. If a judge gives a charge upon the bench, all listen. If a king speaks, all pay attention. When we come to the word, we should think thus with ourselves, we are to hear God in this preacher.
- (2) “Let us consider the weightiness of the matters delivered to us. As Moses said to Israel, Deut. 30:19. ‘I call Heaven and Earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death.’ In the word preached our salvation is concerned; here we are instructed to the kingdom of God, and if ever we will be serious, it should be now.
- (3) “If the word be not regarded, it will not be remembered. Many complain they cannot remember; here is the reason, God punishes their carelessness in hearing with forgetfulness. He suffers Satan to take away the word from them, Matt. 13:4. ‘The fowls of the air came and devoured the seed.’ How many have been robbed of the sermon and their souls both at once.
- (4) “It may be the last time that God will ever speak to us in His word; it may be the last sermon that ever we shall hear; and we may go from the place of hearing, to the place of judging. Did people think thus when they come into

the house of God; perhaps this will be the last time that God will counsel us about our souls, the last time that ever we shall see our minister's face, with what devotion would they come! How would their affections be all on fire in hearing? We give great attention to the last speeches of friends. A parent's dying words are received as oracles. Oh let all this provoke us to diligence in hearing; let us think this may be the last time that *Aaron's bell* shall sound in our ears and before another day, we shall be in another world.

- (iii) "The third duty wherein we are to offer violence to ourselves, is in prayer. Prayer is a duty which keeps the trade of religion flowing. When we either join in prayer with others, or pray alone, we must use holy violence; not eloquence in prayer, but violence carries it. Theodorus, speaking of Luther, 'once (says he) I overheard him in prayer: but, (good God), with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence, as if he had been speaking to his friend.'
- (a) "There must be a stirring up of the heart to prayer, the preparing of our heart by holy thoughts and [cryings out]. The musician first tunes his instrument before he plays.
- (b) "There must be a stirring up of the heart in prayer. Prayer is a lifting up of the mind and soul to God, which cannot be done aright without offering violence to one-self. The names given to prayer imply violence: *wrestling*, *pouring out of the soul*, both of which imply vehemency. The apostle speaks of an effectual fervent prayer, which is a parallel phrase to *offering violence*.
- (c) "Alas, how far from offering violence to themselves in prayer,
- (1) "That give God a *dead, heartless* prayer. God would not have the blind offered, Mal. 1:8; as good offer the blind is as offering the dead. Some are half asleep when they pray, and will a sleepy prayer ever awaken God? Such as mind not their own prayers, how do they think that God should mind them? Those prayers God likes best which come seething hot from the heart.
- (2) "How far are they from offering violence, who give God *distracted* prayer? Will a king tolerate that, while his subject is delivering a petition, and speaking to him, he should be playing with a feather? When we send our hearts on an errand to Heaven, how often do they loiter and play by the way? This is a matter of blushing.
- (d) "That we may offer violence to ourselves and by fervency feather the wing of prayer, let these things be duly weighed.
- (1) "The majesty of God with whom we have to do. He sees how it is with us in prayer, whether we are deeply affected with those things we pray for.
- (2) "Prayer without fervency and violence is no prayer; it is *speaking*, not *praying*. Aschanius taught his parrot the Lord's Prayer. Ambrose said well, 'It is the life and affection in a duty that baptizes it, and gives it a name.'
- (3) "The zeal and violence of the affections in prayer best suits God's nature. He is a *spirit*, John 4:24, and sure that prayer which is full of life and spirit

is the *savory meat he loves*, 1 Peter 2:5. ‘Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.’

- (4) “Consider the need we have of those things which we ask in prayer. We come to ask the favor of God; and if we have not his love, all that we enjoy is cursed to us. We pray that our souls may be washed in Christ’s blood, and if he wash us not, ‘we have no part in him.’ Such are these mercies that if God deny us, we are forever undone. Therefore what violence therefore we need to put forth in prayer? When will a man be earnest, if not when he is begging for his life?
 - (5) “Let it provoke violence in prayer, to consider, that those things which we ask, God hath a mind to grant. If a son ask nothing but what his father is willing to bestow, he may be the more earnest in his suit. This, if any thing, may excite prayer, and carry it in a *fiery chariot* up to Heaven, when we know we pray for nothing but that which God is more willing to grant than we are to ask.
 - (6) “No mercy can be bestowed on us but in a way of prayer. Mercy is purchased by Christ’s blood, but it is conveyed by prayer. All the promises are bonds made over to us, but prayer puts these bonds in suit.
 - (7) “It’s only violence and intenseness of spirit in prayer that has the promise of mercy affixed to it, Matt 7:7. ‘Knock, and it shall be opened.’ Knocking is a violent motion. God’s heart is ever open to fervent prayer. Let us then be fired with zeal, and with Christ pray *yet more earnestly*.
 - (8) “Large returns God has given to violent prayer. Daniel in the den prayed and prevailed. Prayer did shut the lion’s mouth and opened the lion’s den.
 - (9) “That we may put forth this holy violence in prayer, it is requisite there be a renewed principle of grace. If the person be graceless, no wonder the prayer is heartless. The body while it is dead hath no heat in it: while a man is dead in sin, he can have no heat in duty.
 - (10) “That we may be the more violent in prayer, it is good to pray with a sense of our wants. A beggar that is pinched with want, will be earnest in craving alms. How earnest was Samson for water when he was ready to die, Judges 15:18. ‘I die for thirst.’
 - (11) “If we would be violent in prayer, let us beg for a violent wind. The Spirit of God is resembled to a *mighty rushing wind*, Acts 2:2. If any fire be in our sacrifice, it comes down from heaven.
- (iv) “The fourth duty wherein we must offer violence to ourselves is *meditation*; a duty wherein the very heart and life-blood of religion lies. Meditation may be thus described; it is an holy exercise of the mind; whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves. In meditation there are two things:
- (a) “A Christian’s retiring of himself, a locking himself, up from the world. Meditation is a work which cannot be done in a crowd.
 - (b) “It is a serious thinking upon God. It is not a few transient thoughts that are quickly gone, but a fixing and staying of the mind upon heavenly objects: this

cannot be done without exciting all the powers of our souls, and offering violence to ourselves.

- (c) “We are the more to provoke ourselves to this duty, because:
- (1) “Meditation is so cross to flesh and blood. Naturally we shun holy meditation. To meditate on worldly, secular things, even if it were all day, we can do without any diversion: but to have our thoughts fixed on God, how hard do we find it? The natural averseness from this duty shows that we are to offer violence to ourselves in it.
 - (2) “Satan does what he can to hinder this duty. He is an enemy of meditation. Hearing begets knowledge, but meditation begets devotion.
- (d) “What should we meditate on?
- (1) “Meditate seriously upon the corruption of your nature.
 - (2) “Meditate seriously upon the death and passion of Christ. The serious meditation of this would produce repentance. How could we look upon him 'whom we have pierced,' and not mourn over him? When we consider how dearly our sins cost Christ; how should we shed the blood of our sins which shed Christ's blood? The meditation of Christ's death would fire our hearts with love to Christ. What friend shall we love, if not him who died for us? His love to us made him to be cruel unto himself.
 - (3) “Meditate on your evidences for Heaven. What have you to show for Heaven, if you should die this night?
 - (4) “Meditate upon the uncertainty of all earthly comforts. The meditation of the uncertainty of all things under the sun, would much moderate our affections to them.
 - (5) “Meditate on God's severity against sin. Every arrow in God's quiver is shot against it.
 - (6) “Meditate on eternal life. Meditation on eternal life would make us labor for a spiritual life. The meditation on eternal life would comfort us in regard to the shortness of natural life.
- (e) “But where is the meditating Christian? Most people live in a hurry; they are so distracted with the cares of the world, that they can find no time to meditate or scarcely ask their souls how they do. We are not like the saints in former ages. David meditated in God's precepts, Psalm 119:15. ‘Isaac walked in the evening to meditate,’ Gen. 24:63. He did take a turn with God. What devout meditations do we read in St. Augustine and Anselm? But it is too much out of date among our modern Christians.
- (f) “Meditation makes the Word preached to profit; it works it upon the conscience. Holy meditation quickens the affections, Psalm 119:97. ‘O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.’ Meditation has a transforming power in it. The hearing of the Word may affect us, but the meditating upon it doth transform us. Meditation produces reformation, Psalm 119:59. ‘I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.’
- (g) “*But how shall we be able to meditate? Get a love for spiritual things. We usually meditate on those things which we love. The voluptuous man can*

muse on his pleasures: the covetous man on his bags of gold. Did we love heavenly things, we would meditate more on them. Many say they cannot meditate, because they lack memory; but is it not rather because they want affection? Did they love the things of God, they would make them their continual study and meditation.

- (v) “The fifth duty wherein we are to offer violence to ourselves, *self-examination*; a duty of great importance: it is a parleying with one’s own heart. Self-examination is a *spiritual inquisition*; a bringing one’s self to trial. A good Christian doth as it were begin the day of Judgment here in his own soul. Self-searching is a heart-anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body, discovers the inward parts, the heart, liver, and arteries, so a Christian anatomizes himself; he searches what is flesh and what is spirit; what is sin, and what is grace. The rule by which a Christian must try himself, is the Word of God.
- (vi) “The sixth duty wherein we must offer violence to ourselves, is the *religious sanctifying of the Lord’s day*.
- (a) “That there should be a day of holy rest dedicated to God appears from its institution. ‘Remember to keep holy the Sabbath.’ Our Christian Sabbath comes in the room of the Jewish Sabbath: it is called *the Lord’s day*, Rev. 1:10, from Christ the author of it. Our Sabbath is altered by Christ’s own appointment. He arose this day out of the grave, and appeared on it often to His disciples, 1 Cor. 16:1: to intimate to them (saith Athanasius) that he transferred the Sabbath to the Lord’s day. And St. Augustine says that by Christ’s rising on the first day of the week, it was consecrated to be the Christian Sabbath, in remembrance of his resurrection. The primitive church had this day in high veneration: it was a great badge of their religion: for when the question was asked, *do you keep the Sabbath?*; the answer was, I am a Christian; I dare not omit the celebration of the Lord’s day! What great cause do we have to thankfully remember this day! As the benefit of Israel’s deliverance from the Babylonish captivity was so great that it drowned the remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, Jer. 16:14: so the benefit of our deliverance from Satan’s captivity and the rising of Christ after finishing the glorious work of our redemption are so famous, that in respect of his other benefits, receive as it were in diminution. Great was the work of creation; but greater the work of redemption. It cost more to redeem us than to make us. In the one, there was only the speaking a word, Psalm 148:5: in the other, the shedding of blood, Heb. 9:22. In creation God gave us ourselves; in redemption he gives us himself. So that the Sabbath, putting us in mind of our redemption, ought to be observed with the highest devotion. Herein we must offer holy violence to ourselves.
- (b) “When this blessed day approaches, we should labour, that as the day is sanctified, so may our hearts be sanctified. We must on this day *rest from all the works of our calling*. When this blessed day approaches, we must lift up our heart in thankfulness to God, that he has put another *price into our hands* for gaining heavenly wisdom. This day approaching, we must in the morning dress and fit our souls for the receiving of the Word. And being met together,

we must set ourselves, as in the presence of God, with seriousness and delight to hear God's sacred Word. We must labor to be bettered by every Sabbath: where the Lord lays out cost, he looks for fruit. We must dedicate the whole day to God. We must rejoice in this day, as being a day wherein we enjoy much of God's presence, John 8:56. 'Abraham saw my day and rejoiced. So when we see a Sabbath day coming, we should rejoice. The Protestants in France called their church Paradise, because there they met with God. The Jews called the Sabbath *the desire of days*, Isaiah 58:13. 'Thou shall call the Sabbath a delight.' This we should look upon as the best day, as the queen of days, crowned with a blessing, Psalm 118:24. 'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' He has made all the days, but hath sanctified this. We should look upon this day as a spiritual market for our souls, wherein we have holy commerce and traffic with God. This day of rest is the beginning of an eternal rest.

(vii) "The seventh duty wherein we must offer violence to ourselves, is holy converse [fellowship]. Mal. 3:17. 'They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.' A gracious person hath not only religion only in his heart, but also in his tongue, Psalm 37:30. 'The law of God is in his heart, and his tongue talks of judgment:' he drops holy words as pearls. It's the fault of Christians, that they do not in company provoke themselves to say good discourse: it is a sinful modesty; there is much visiting, but they do not give one another's souls a visit. In worldly things their tongue is as the pen of a ready writer, but in matters of religion, it is as if their tongue did cleave to the roof of their mouth. The discourse demonstrates what the heart is. Holy conference is very edifying. God takes special notice of every good word we speak when we meet. Holy discourse will be a means to bring Christ into our company.

3. We must offer violence to Satan.

- a. "He labours to storm the castle of the heart; he stirs up passion, lust, and revenge. These are called 'fiery darts,' Eph. 6:16, because they oft set the soul on fire. Satan in regard to his fierceness is called a Lion, 1 Peter 4:6. 'Your adversary the Devil is a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour.' Not (says Chrysostom) whom he may *bite*, but *devour*.
- b. "What he cannot do by *force*, he will endeavor to do by *fraud*. Satan hath several subtle policies in tempting. In suiting his temptations to the complexion and temper of the body, Satan lays suitable baits. He knew Achan's s covetous humour, and tempted him with a wedge of gold. He tempts the sanguine man with beauty. Another subtlety is to draw men to evil under a pretence of good. Satan tempts to sin gradually. Satan tempts to evil in lawful things. Satan puts men upon doing good out of evil ends: if he cannot hurt them by *scandalous* actions, he will by *virtuous* actions. The Devil persuades men to evil by such as are good.
- c. "Faith not only not yields, but beats back the temptation. Faith holds the promise in one hand, and Christ in the other: The promise encourages faith, and Christ strengthens it: so faith beats the enemy out of the field.

- d. “We must offer violence to Satan by prayer. We overcome him upon our knees. As Samson called to Heaven for help, so a Christian by prayer fetches in auxiliary forces from Heaven. *In all temptations, go to God by prayer.* Lord, teach me to use every piece of the spiritual armor; how to hold the shield, how to wear the helmet, how to use the sword of the Spirit. Lord, strengthen me in the battle; let me rather die a conqueror than be taken prisoner, and led by Satan in triumph. Thus we must offer violence to Satan. There is ‘a lion in the way,’ but we must resolve upon fighting.
 - e. “And let this encourage us to offer violence to Satan. Our enemy is beaten in part already. Christ, who is ‘the captain of our salvation,’ has given Satan his death-wound upon the cross. The devil is a chained enemy, and a conquered enemy; therefore fear not to give battle to him. *Resist him, and he will fly;* he knows no other march than running away.
4. We must offer violence to the *world*. The world shows its *golden apple*. It is a part of our vow in baptism to fight under Christ’s banner against the world. Take heed of being drowned in the luscious delights of it. *It is deceitful*. Our Savior calls it, ‘The deceitfulness of riches,’ Matt. 13:22. It is *defiling*, James 1:17. ‘Pure religion is to keep himself unspotted from the world.’ It is *perishing*, Job 2:17. The fashion of the world passes away.’ The world is like a flower which withers while we are smelling it.
 5. Fourthly, we must offer violence to Heaven. ‘The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence.’ Though Heaven is given us freely, yet we must take pains for it. Canaan was given Israel freely, but they had to fight with the Canaanites. It is not a lazy wish, or a sleepy prayer, will bring us to Heaven; we must offer violence. Therefore in Scripture our earnestness for Heaven is shown by those allegories and metaphors which imply violence. Sometimes by striving. Luke 13:24. ‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate.’ The Greek signifies, *Strive as in an agony*. Wrestling, which is a violent exercise. Eph. 6:12. We are to wrestle with a body of sin, and with the powers of hell. Running in a race, 1 Cor. 9:24. ‘So run that ye may obtain.’
 - a. “The reasons why there must be this offering violence to Heaven are:
 - (i) “God’s indispensable command. 2 Peter 1:10. ‘Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.’
 - (ii) “God’s decree. The Lord hath in his eternal decree joined the end and the means together: *striving* and *entering*, the *race* and the *crown*. And a man can no more think to come to Heaven without offering violence, than he can think to come to the end of his journey that never sets a step in the way.
 - b. “We must offer violence to Heaven in regard to the difficulty of the work: *Taking a kingdom*. First, we must be pulled out of another kingdom, ‘The kingdom of darkness,’ Acts 26:18. To get out of the state of nature is hard, and when that is done, and we are cut off from the wild olive, and implanted into Christ, there is new work still to do; new sins to mortify; new temptations to resist, new graces to quicken. This will not be done without violence.
 - c. “We must offer violence to Heaven in regard to the violent assaults made against us. Our own hearts oppose us. All the powers of hell oppose us.

- d. “ We must be violent, because it is a matter of the highest importance. Violence is to be offered, if we consider, 1. What we shall save: *the precious soul*, 2. What we shall gain: a *kingdom*.
6. “If there must be this offering of violence, it shows us it is not so easy a thing as men imagine to get to Heaven. There are so many precepts to obey; so many promises to believe; so many rocks to avoid, that it is a difficult matter to be saved. Some fancy a fine easy way to Heaven, an idle wish, a deathbed tear, but the text tells us of *offering violence*. Alas, there is a great work to be done. Our salvation cost Christ *blood*; it will cost us *sweat*. The boat may as well get to shore without rowing, as we can get to Heaven without offering violence. Let us then examine whether we put forth this holy violence for Heaven?
- a. “Do we strive with our hearts to get them into an holy frame?
- b. “Do we set time apart to call ourselves to account, and to try our evidences for Heaven?
- c. “Do we use violence in prayer? Is there fire in our sacrifice?
- d. “Do we thirst for the living God? 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?
- e. “Are we skilled in self-denial?
- f. “Are we lovers of God?
- g. “Do we keep our spiritual watch? Do we set spies in every place, watching our thoughts, our eyes, our tongues?
- h. “Do we press after further degrees of sanctity? Phil 3:13. ‘Reaching forth unto those things which are before.’
- i. “Do we labor to be more eminent for love and good works?
- j. “Are we got above the world? Though we walk on earth, do we trade in Heaven?
- k. “Do we set ourselves always under God’s eye? Psalm 16:8. ‘I have set the Lord always before me.’ Do we live soberly and godly, remembering that whatever we are doing our Judge looks on?
- l. “If it be thus with us, we are happy persons. This is the holy violence the text speaks of, and is the right way of taking the kingdom of God. And surely never did Noah so willingly put forth his hand to receive the dove into the ark, as Jesus Christ will put forth His hand to receive us into Heaven.