

THE Watchword

"Oh that Thou would rend the heavens, that Thou would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence. As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make known Thy name to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence!" Isaiah 64:1,2

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The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage prayer and passion for a true revival of Apostolic Christianity. The following material is offered in the hopes of provoking zeal and providing a vision of what the Church could be if we would fervently pray.

PRAYER MAKES HISTORY

In James 5:10 the Church is exhorted to "take the prophets for an example". A careful study of the "Holy Men of Old" is able to kindle both the fires of self-sacrifice and prayerful devotion. Prophetic examples are not confined only to the pages of the Scriptures. Though often neglected and forgotten, God's prophetic torches have always burned throughout the Church's History. One such burning prophet was Girolamo Savonarola. Through this one man's Spirit-filled ministry of tears, prayer and preaching much of Europe was prepared for the Great Protestant Reformation.

Born in Ferrara, Italy, September 14, 1452, Savonarola was the third in a family of seven children- five sons and two daughters. As a boy his devotion and fervor increased as he grew older, and he spent many hours in prayer and fasting. He would kneel in church for hours engaged in prayer. He was very contemplative, and his soul was deeply stirred by the sin and worldliness he saw on every hand. The luxury, splendor, and wealth displayed by the rich and the awful poverty of the poor weighed heavily on his heart. Italy was the prey of petty tyrants and wicked priests, and dukes and popes vied with each other in lewdness, lavishness, and cruelty. These things brought great sorrow to his young soul which was burning for holiness and truth. He talked little, and kept to himself. He loved to be in lonely places, in the open fields, or along the green banks of the river Po, and there wandering, sometimes singing, sometimes weeping, he gave utterance to the strong emotions which boiled in his breast. His great soulful eyes were resplendent, and the color of the heavens, but they were often filled with tears. Prayer was his



"Girolamo Savonarola"

one great solace, and his tears would often stain the altar steps, where he sought aid from heaven against the vile and corrupt age.

One day, he suddenly beheld in a vision the heavens opened, and all the future calamities of the Church passed before his eyes; and he seemed to hear a voice charging him to announce them to the people. From that moment he was convinced of his Divine mission, and was filled with a new unction and power. His preaching was now with a voice of thunder, and his rebukes against sin were so terrific that the people who listened to him sometimes went about the streets half-dazed, bewildered, and speechless. His congregations were often in tears, so that the whole church resounded with their sobs and weeping. Men and women of every age and condition, workmen, poets, philosophers, would burst into passionate tears.

Savonarola's zeal for prayer, his faith, and his devotion increased day by day. Savonarola, when engaged in prayer, frequently fell into a trance, and was sometimes

so transported by holy fervor that he was obliged to retire to some solitary place. Some of his biographers relate that on Christmas Eve, in the year 1486, Savonarola, while seated in the pulpit, remained immovable for five hours, in a trance, and that his face seemed illuminated to all in the church.

The influence of Savonarola was now greater than ever. The people of Florence, Italy abandoned their vile and worldly books. All prayed, went to church, and the rich gave freely to the poor. Merchants restored ill-gotten gains. All the people forsook the carnivals and vanities in which they had indulged, and made huge bonfires of their worldly books, obscene pictures, and other things of the kind. The children marched from house to house in procession, singing hymns, and collecting everything they styled vanities. Savonarola's fearless sermons aroused the anger of many, and especially of the corrupt pope, cardinals, and priests of the Roman Catholic Church. He was threatened, excommunicated, and persecuted; and finally, in 1498, by express order of Alexander VI., one of the vilest of popes, he was beaten, strangled and burned in the public square of Florence, the city he loved so well.

The life of Savonarola exemplifies many precious qualities that our fainthearted and distracted age so desperately needs. Such qualities as persistent prayer, patience, purity and most importantly a sacrificial love for Jesus. Until we as the body of Christ return to these holy principles, true reformation and revival will not be realized; Oh Lord break our hearts and open our eyes!

References Used -

"Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians"

by J. G. Lawson

"Heroes of The Reformation"

by Richard Newton

HOLY VIOLENCE!

"... the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. 11:12.

The exercises of the worship of God are contrary to nature; therefore, there must be a provoking of ourselves to them. The movement of the soul toward sin is natural, but its movement toward heaven is violent. The stone moves easily to the center. It has an innate propensity downward, but to draw up a millstone into the air is done by violence because it is against nature. So to lift up the heart to heaven in duty is done by violence and we must provoke ourselves to it. What is it to provoke ourselves to duty? It is to awaken ourselves and shake off spiritual slothfulness. Let us then examine whether we put forth this holy violence for heaven. Do we set time apart to call ourselves to account and to try our evidences for heaven? *"My spirit made diligent search"* (Ps. 77:6). Do we take our hearts, as a watch, all in pieces to see what is amiss and to mend it? Are we curiously inquisitive into the state of our souls? Are we afraid of artificial grace, as we are of artificial happiness? Do we use violence in prayer? Is there fire in our sacrifice? Is the wind of the Spirit filling our sails, causing unutterable groans (Rom. 8:26)? Do we pray in the morning as if we were to die at night? Do we thirst for the living God? Are our souls enlarged with holy desires? *"There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee"* (Ps. 73:25). 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?

Are we skilled in self-denial? Can we deny our ease, our aims, our interests? Can we cross our own will to fulfill God's? Can we behead our beloved sin? To pluck out the right eye requires violence. (Matt. 18:9). Are we lovers of God? It is not how much we do, but how much we love. Does love command the castle of our hearts? Does Christ's beauty and sweetness constrain us? (2 Cor. 5:14). Do we love God more than we fear hell? Do we keep our spiritual watch? Do we set spies in every place, watching our thoughts, our eyes, our tongues? When we, have prayed against sin, do we watch against temptation? Do we press after further degrees of sanctity? *"Reaching forth unto those things which are before"* (Phil. 3:13). A good Christian is a wonder; he is the most contented yet the least satisfied. He is contented with a little of the world, but not satisfied with a little grace.

How violent Christ was about our salvation! He was in agony; He *"continued all night in prayer"* (Luke 6:12). He wept, He fasted, He died a violent death; He rose violently out of the grave. Was Christ so violent for our salvation, and does it not become us to be violent who are so intimately concerned in it? Christ's violence was not only satisfactory, but exemplary. It was not only to appease God, but to teach us. Christ was violent in dying to teach us to be violent in believing.

by Thomas Watson
"Heaven Taken By Storm"

Should We Not WEEP?

If Jesus wept over Jerusalem, when He beheld a cloud of wrath gathering over it - why, Oh, why, should not we weep? I repeat it, why should not we weep to behold the mouths of the grave and of hell preparing to open and to engulf so many. Instead of repressing our tears, should we not rather say with the prophet Jeremiah, *"Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people?"* And if sinners will despise, and sin on, we can only resolve with Jeremiah again, *"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears."* Who of us, or who that has ever read the writings and history of Jeremiah the prophet, would charge him with weak-mindedness? We are the followers of *"The Man of Sorrows."* Like Him, we are *"acquainted with grief."*

From Christ's own lips we learn that, *"unless you are born again, you cannot see or enter the kingdom of heaven."* (John 3:3,5). And, had He added, you shall never, in that case, see or enter hell, perhaps our eyes could remain dry. But, alas! Exclusion from heaven implies incarceration in hell, - *"the fire that never shall be quenched, - the worm that never dieth, - the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness; - and the horrors of everlasting punishment, - eternal damnation, - the fire prepared for the devil and his angels"*. Did Christ over sinners weep, and shall our cheeks be dry? Let floods of penitential grief burst forth from every eye. *The Son of God in tears. The wondering angels see; be thou astonished, Oh, my soul, He shed those tears for thee! He wept that we might weep; each sin demands a tear; in heaven alone no sin is found, and there's no weeping there.*

Ah! Poor sinner! We have the weeping part now, but YOUR weeping time is coming, but with this difference, ours is limited to time, yours has an eternity appended. The promise to us is,

that God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes in heaven. (Rev. 7:17). Neither sorrow, nor cause of sorrow, nor tears nor cause of tears, for the days of our mourning shall be ended in heaven. But, alas for you who may drop into hell - for sorrow and the cause of sorrow, tears and the cause of tears, must coexist with your eternity; your mourning and the cause of mourning shall never, never end. Why, then, should we not weep over you, in view of your sad future? Why should we not weep, seeing there is yet hope of your salvation that you may begin and weep as freely for yourselves, as we do for you? There is hope, and we weep. No wonder tears are wiped away in heaven, when hope for the wilfully damned is gone, and gone forever! Harken, all of you, to what Jesus says on this subject: *"Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep."* But He had just said to His disciples, *"Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh."* So, then, this is our weeping time. Yours is to come. May it be now, also!

by James Caughey
"Showers of Blessing"

COMFORT & JOY

THE MOURNER'S PRIVILEGE

by Thomas Watson

Mourning is one way to solid joy. *"The sweet wine is that which comes out of the wine-press of the eyes,"* says Chrysostom. The soul is never more enlarged than when it can weep. Closet tears are better than court music. The soul of a Christian is most eased when it can vent itself by holy mourning. David who was the great mourner in Israel was the sweet singer in Israel. *"My tears were my meat"* (Psalm 42:3). *"The tears of the penitent,"* says Bernard, *"are sweeter than all worldly joy"*. A Christian thinks himself sometimes in the suburbs of heaven when he can weep. When Hannah had wept, she went away and was no more sad. Sugar when it melts is sweetest. When a Christian melts in tears, he has the sweetest joy. When the daughter of Pharaoh descended into the river, she found a babe there among the reeds; so when we descend into the river of repenting tears, we find the babe, Jesus, there who shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Mourning goes before comfort as the lancing of a wound precedes the cure. The antinomian talks of comfort, but cries down mourning for sin. He is like a foolish patient who, having a pill prescribed him, licks the sugar, but throws away the pill. The libertine is all for joy and comfort.

He licks the sugar but throws away the bitter pill of repentance. If we have true comfort, we must have it in God's way and method. Sorrow for sin ushers in joy: *"I will restore comforts to him, and to his mourners"* (Isaiah 57:18). The true sunshine of joy is that which comes after a shower of tears. We may as well expect a crop without seed, as comfort without gospel-mourning.

Observe that God keeps His best wine till last. First He prescribes mourning for sin and then gives the wine of consolation. The devil does quite the contrary. He shows the best first and keeps the worst till last. First, he shows the wine sparkling in the glass, then comes the biting of the serpent. (See Proverbs 23:32). Satan sets his dainty dishes before men. He presents sin to them colored with beauty, sweetened with pleasure, silvered with profit, and then afterward the sad reckoning is brought in. He showed Judas first the silver bait, and then struck him with the hook. This is the reason why sin has so many followers, because it shows the best first. First, the golden crowns, then comes the lion's teeth. (Revelation 9:7,8).

Observe, gospel tears are not lost; they are seeds of comfort. While the penitent pours out tears, God pours in joy. *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."* (Psalms 126:5). It was the end of Christ's anointing and coming into the world, that He might comfort them that mourn (Isaiah 61:3). Well then may the apostle call it *"a repentance not to be repented of"* (2 Corinthians 7:10). A man's drunkenness is to be repented of; his uncleanness is to be repented of; but his repentance is never to be repented of, because it is the inlet to joy. *"Blessed art they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."* Here is sweet fruit from a bitter stock. Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled with water, and then turned the water into wine (John 2:9). So when the eye, that earthen vessel, has been filled with water, then Christ will turn the water of tears into the wine of joy. *"Holy mourning,"* says Basil, *"is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy grows."*

Reasons why the mourner shall be comforted:

Because mourning is made on purpose for this end. Mourning is not prescribed for itself, but that it may lead on to something else, that it may lay a train for comfort.

Therefore we sow in tears that we may reap in joy. Holy mourning is a spiritual medicine. Now a medicine is not prescribed for itself, but for the sake of health. So gospel-mourning is appointed for this very end, to bring forth joy.

The spiritual mourner is the fittest person for comfort. When the heart is broken for sin, now it is fittest for joy. God pours the golden oil of comfort into broken vessels. The mourner's heart is emptied of pride and God fills the empty with His blessing. First, the comforts of God's Spirit are laid in deep conviction: *"And when He (that is, the Comforter) is come, He shall reprove (or, convince) the world of sin"* (John 16:7,8). Why does conviction go before consolation? Conviction fits us for comfort. By conviction the Spirit sweetly disposes the heart to seek after Christ and then to receive Christ. Once the soul is convinced of sin and of the hell that follows it, a Saviour is precious.

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The comforts of the Spirit are humbling. The more water is poured into a bucket, the lower it descends; the fuller the ship is laden with sweet spices, the lower it sails. The more a Christian is filled with the sweet comforts of the Spirit, the lower he sails in humility. The fuller a tree is of fruit, the lower the branch hangs. The more full we are of "the fruit of the Spirit, joy and peace" (Galatians 5:22), the more we bend in humility. Those who say they have comfort, but are proud, who have learned to despise others and have climbed above ordinances; their comforts are delusions. The devil is able, not only to "transform himself into angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14), but he can transform himself into a comforter. It is easy to counterfeit money, to silver over brass and put the king's image upon it. The devil can silver over false comforts and make them look as if they had the stamp of the King of heaven upon them. The comforts of God are humbling. Though they lift the heart up in thankfulness, yet they do not puff it up in pride. The comforts reserved for the mourners are "filling comforts" "The God of hope fill you with all joy . . ." (Romans 15:13). "Ask . . . that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). When God pours in the joys of heaven, they fill the heart and make it run over. "I am exceeding joyful . . ." (2 Corinthians 7:4).

The comforts which God gives His mourners are infinitely, transporting and ravishing. So delightful are they and amazing, that they cause a jubilation which, as some of the learned say, is so great that it cannot be expressed. Of all things joy is the most hard to be deciphered. It is called "joy unspeakable." (1 Peter 1:8). You may sooner taste honey than tell how sweet it is. The wine of the Spirit can sweeten the waters of Marah. They who are possessed of these heavenly comforts can gather grapes of thorns, and fetch honey out of the lion's carcass. They are strong consolations indeed, that can stand it

out against the fiery trial, and turn the flame into a bed of roses. How powerful is that comfort which can make a Christian glory in tribulations! (Romans 5:3). A believer is never so sad but that he can rejoice. The bird of paradise can sing in the winter.

The comforts that God's mourners have are heart-quieting comforts. They cause a sweet acquiescence and rest in the soul. The heart of a Christian is in a kind of discomposure, like the needle in the compass; it shakes and trembles till the Comforter comes. Some creatures cannot live but in the sun. A Christian is even dead in the nest, unless he may have the sunlight of God's countenance. "Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit" (Psalm 143:7).

The comforts of the Spirit are abiding comforts. As they abound in us so they abide with us. "He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). Worldly comforts are always upon the wing, ready to fly. They are like a land-flood, or a flash

of lightning. All things here are transient, but the comforts with which God feeds His mourners are immortal. "Who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). Though a Christian does not always have a sunbeam of comfort, yet he has a dawning of it in his soul. He always has a ground of hope and a root of joy. There is that within him which bears up his heart, and which he would not on any terms part with. Behold, then, the mourner's privilege, he shall be comforted. David who was the great mourner of Israel, was the sweet singer of Israel. The weeping dove shall be covered with the golden feathers of comfort. Oh, how rare and superlative are these comforts!

by Thomas Watson
"The Beatitudes"

*"DAVID WHO WAS
THE GREAT
MOURNER OF
ISRAEL,
WAS THE SWEET
SINGER OF ISRAEL."*

The Watchword is a free monthly publication designed to awaken the Church to her need for humility, repentance and revival. We gratefully welcome your prayers and financial support as the Holy Spirit leads. Please feel free to make copies of the Watchword for your family, friends and ministry use.

Prayer Times at Western Hills Church
Friday; 6 to 7am (auditorium) • Saturday; 8-11am (prayer room)

ALWAYS REMEMBER

A truly prayerful and consecrated life unto God can only be established by faith. It is by trusting in the finished work of Christ that we are empowered to produce the fruit of love and righteousness.

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith." (1 John 5:4)