

In the Wake of Racist Attacks, Christians Like Greg Laurie Turn to Hope

After white supremacists stormed Charlottesville, Virginia, Christians like **Greg Laurie** refuse to let evil win.

Later this month, the pastor and founder of Harvest America will share hopeful messages with more than 100,000 as part of SoCal Harvest 2017.

“In a weekend marked by a form of violence and hatred seemingly more reminiscent of 1967 than 2017, I am reminded of the words from Scripture: ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ [see Gal. 3:28]. As a Christian and as an American, I am heartbroken by what took place in Charlottesville,” Laurie says.

“What’s most important is what we do now, in the aftermath of Charlottesville. We must be united against racism in all its forms especially against anti-Semitism, white-supremacy and all associated ideologies. Above all, we must pray that faith, hope and love will win the day in our country. Let those of us in the church lead the way in condemning such vile and evil thinking and lift up a better way, one free of fear, bigotry and hate. Let us lift up the good news of Christ who taught us that it is by our love that they will know us. May God grant us the strength to be a church marked by His love for all people, in all corners of our country and the world, in all situations and at all times,” Laurie says.

Laurie isn’t the only believer deeply shaken by the weekend’s events. Nor is he the only one who knows where to turn in times of distress.

Winfred Neely, a professor of hermeneutics and homiletics at Moody Bible, Institute says:

A Unite the Right protest this past weekend, conceived in hatred, fear, and the heretical doctrine of racial superiority, gave birth to twins: violence and death. One of the protesters, James Alex Fields, a 20-year-old Nazi sympathizer, plowed his car into a crowd of counter protesters, killing Heather Heyer and injuring others. The image of his car plowing into a crowd of counter protesters is eerily reminiscent of recent terrorist attacks in Nice and London. As followers of Christ, we must stand against white supremacy or any other kind of racial or ethnic supremacy. At the same time, we should follow the example of the psalmist and lament the Charlottesville situation. "O Lord, how long?" (Ps. 6:3).

God is omnipresent; He is everywhere at the same time in the fullness of His being. God was not absent in Charlottesville; He was present. He observed the violence, the hatred and the death this past weekend. Moreover, Jesus, His Son, understands the pain and ugly face of hatred the scarred the residents of the quaint university town of Charlottesville, having experienced himself the hatred of people (John 15:18), and the violent death of the cross (Rev. 5:9), bearing in His own glorified body the scars of Calvary (Rev. 5:6).

In the attempt to help people who have lost loved one in Charlottesville's turmoil, theological about where was God may not be what people need at this point. The best comfort we may offer to the grieving is the ministry of presence, the ministry of tears and the ministry of silence (Job 2:11-13). Job's friends were at their best when they were silent; when they started talking things went downhill for 28 chapters (3-31)

One of the most important ways the church can shine in our hate-filled world is to learn from past church failures in

the area of race and ethnic relations. It is imperative today that the church be a prophetic voice instead of an echo of the racially divided culture. We must demonstrate in an observable manner the oneness of the body of Christ (John 17:11, 20-21). As we embrace our common mission and purpose, we will be able transcend our ethnic, cultural, and class differences, lament past failure, learn from present hurt, and construct a better and more biblically shaped future.

Support and encourage the vigorous planting and nurturing of multi-ethnic congregations. I pastor a multi-ethnic congregation in Chicagoland; we strive to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The fact that we worship and serve the Lord together with mutual understanding and respect has apologetic force, giving us some credibility in our immediate ministry context.

We must dismantle all forms of racial superiority in our evangelical and Christian institutions. The doctrine of white supremacy has been the scourge our nation and the church. We must dismantle it and make sure that we do not substitute it with another form of racial or ethnic superiority. Unless we do this, we will not have credibility in the world. Of course, we must dismantle the doctrine of racial superiority in the larger society as well, but the church must be an example in this regard. God loves the entire human family and our attitudes should reflect the scope of God's love (John 3:16).

Sam Rohrer of the American Pastors Network says:

The deplorable circumstances in Charlottesville should indeed get the attention of all Americans. Yet, in the midst of this event, for which both sides share blame, these questions must not be overlooked: What has happened in America to produce such increasing hostilities and anger among our people? And can unity be achieved just by our leaders demanding it?

In reality, we didn't get to this place by accident nor overnight. The rejection of moral truth, healing and [the] transformative power of redemption and forgiveness available only through Jesus Christ is where it started. The coarsening of society is assured where life in the womb is cavalierly discarded, where God's plan for the family and human sexuality is jettisoned, where a "selfless others focus" is replaced with a "selfish-only focus" and where duty is replaced with "right." Such it is today.

Is unity again achievable? The answer is yes. But, for some, even this statement may be dividing—yet it is nonetheless the truth. Unity is not the goal but a byproduct. Unity never demands full agreement in all things by all people. Yet what unity does demand is an agreement on a common body of truth. In the United States, that common body of truth was found in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, where there is God who created life and then 'endowed certain unalienable rights' to the people, who 'under God' agree with God that He is perfect; that mankind is sinful and not naturally good.

But that redemption and healing through faith in Jesus Christ alone can transform the mind and the heart, and heal families, communities and the nation. No one race, no one color, no one nationality has a claim to this truth. Yet, true equality, true justice and true unity can, in fact, result when people from all walks of life agree with God on these truths.

Any nation or people who believes these things can experience peace, security and unity. Our nation once did—not ever perfect, of course—but overwhelmingly embraced this view, and God blessed it as no nation ever before it. We will now, in this time of increasing need, either look to God and agree with Him and do what He says and regain the freedom we so love, or we will look to ourselves, to government or to some man or woman and descend into the abyss of slavery and totalitarianism. There is no other choice.

Tim Wildmon of the American Family Association says:

For Christians, there can never be any compromise with hate, and there is perhaps no more vile expression of satanic violence than Nazi ideology and the Nazi swastika.

Our nation is polarized to a degree not seen since the late 1960s, and our prayer is for the public discourse to remain vigorous yet peaceful. We must respect each other's right to hold divergent views, while not giving into the temptation to turn our differences into an excuse for vengeful violence.

Nevertheless, while Americans enjoy great freedoms to express virtually any idea in the public square, it is important that we simultaneously maintain the right to clearly and forcefully denounce abhorrent ideas—such as white supremacy, racism or hatred of the Jewish people.

AFA calls on members of the body of Christ, especially, to pray for healing in America, and we humbly ask God to forgive our many sins and pour out His spirit on our land once more.