

Top Christian Leaders Decry Charlottesville Riots as 'Rooted in the Demonic'

As white nationalists gathered at the University of Virginia and clashed with counter-protesters over the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, the eyes of the nation began seeking answers to questions almost too painful to ask.

Many hearts were broken as people asked how God could allow such vitriol in 2017. Here's how the top Christian leaders responded.

John Gray, associate pastor of Lakewood Church

This is right now. And what breaks my heart even more is the silence of SOME parts of the body of Christ. Racism is spiritual. It manifests in the natural, political and economic forums, but is ROOTED IN THE DEMONIC mindset that somehow, one's color makes them immediately superior to another. Thank you @jentezen for standing and saying what MANY with your platform won't. It's one thing for me as a black preacher to say something. But it speaks LOUDLY to the church when white pastors speak on it as well. The church must take the lead on this, especially the pastors of these gentrified mixed churches with multi-ethnic congregations. God help us. People are dying in Charlottesville. Help us God.

Darrell Scott, pastor of New Spirit Revival Center

There's no way to justify or defend the abominable behavior of the hate groups responsible for the violence & destruction in Charlottesville. The exercise of "Free Speech" is NOT

*synonymous with the exercise of violent and destructive behavior! #**Charlottesville**. What behind the scenes influencer decided to pull the race card back out this weekend? ... It wasn't the removal of a statue; it was the removal of what the statue represented in the minds of sick individuals that inspired protest. Racism has Never Not existed in America (excuse the double negative, grammar police). In fact, it has Never Not existed on this Planet! I didn't point fingers at White Nationalists when Blacks protested; I won't point fingers at Black Nationalists when Whites protest! Protest is an American Right; Violent, Destructive "Protest" is an American Wrong!*

Jentezen Franklin, Free Chapel Church

I just saw the news of what's taking place in Virginia concerning the white racist march! This is evil personified and we denounce it. This is what hatred and sin looks like. Their hate will not win. Racism is still alive and well, the only answer is God's love and the church of Jesus Christ standing hand in hand with our brothers and sisters of every race. We are one!

Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Council

When hell exhales the outcome is hatred. Both unacceptable and diabolical, racism must be confronted by God fearing people.

I condemn the forces of white nationalism, white supremacy and anti-Semitism that divide our country today, and I also condemn those who seek to politicize it all for their political gain.

Unless, we bridge this senseless and partisan divide there will be more horrors to come. It's on each of us to be a part

of solution and it begins with turning our political swords into plowshares. We must begin to work together to heal our nation. We all have a part to play and a choice to make, today.

Mark Burns, pastor of Harvest Worship Center

You do need to understand that the people that elected Donald Trump, David Duke does not represent us. David Duke, even though he mentions the name of Donald Trump, as though they are doing Donald Trump a favor, that is a lie straight from the gates of hell. David Duke does not represent the America that elected Donald Trump to be the president of the United States. ... The fact of the matter is this: David Duke can mention Donald Trump's name all day long, but he does not represent nor does [Donald Trump] endorse the atrocities represented by this group.

Eric Johnson, senior leader of Bethel Church

When one race believes it is superior to another race, it is a direct contradiction to the heart of God and goes against the very core of who Jesus is. We are appalled and disgusted with the display of racism and violence that has taken place in Charlottesville, Virginia, this weekend. Racism is undeniably wrong and stupid, and we are praying for peace and healing to all those affected by these senseless acts. We also pray for great courage and wisdom for the authorities and all that are involved to end this nonsense, and that those filled with hate in their hearts would experience God's love and come to repentance.

Larry Tomczak, cultural commentator

The Bible tells us, "Where evil does abound so much more does grace abound." Amidst the chaos in this situation, we must believe God for His intervention and for abundant grace!

This is an opportunity for Christian involvement demonstrating the fruit of kindness. Kindness is not the same as merely being nice but rather conveying God's love with firm conviction of what is right to do in the face of evil.

We must be submissive to the governing authorities and do everything we can to promote respect for law-enforcement.

We should pray realizing "we are not fighting flesh and blood but powers and principalities" that are working aggressively to bring about further death, destruction and division in our nation at this time.

All of us should come together in our homes, churches and Bible studies to intercede for God's will to be done at this time. "The anger of man does not work the righteousness of God." Those who are acting in a lawless capacity need to be apprehended and face the consequences of their actions.

Finally, let us pray that God would release His angels to serve as a buffer against the demonic forces working to stir up further violence and confusion.

Franklin Graham, Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Pray for Governor of Virginia Terry McAuliffe, law enforcement and everyone struggling to deal with the chaos and violence that reared its ugly head in Charlottesville today. It is such a tragedy—life was lost and many people were injured. Violence and hatred aren't the answer. God's Word tells us, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Eph. 4:31). Join me in praying for the injured, the families of those who died—and for peace to be restored.

Michael Brown, cultural commentator

There is nothing American about white supremacism—nothing heroic, nothing praiseworthy, nothing patriotic. It is a rotten, ugly mindset full of hatred, bigotry and pride, and every person of conscience should denounce it. It degrades others who are also created in the image of God and takes His name in vain to further its cause. Whatever our political or racial or ethnic background, as Americans, we need to stand together against it.

The bottom line is simple: I don't care what color your skin is and what your ethnic background is. When neo-Nazis rally, you condemn it. When the KKK rallies, you condemn it. When black supremacists rally, you condemn it. And when a man plows his car into a crowd, killing one person and injuring 19, you condemn it.

Bert Farias, cultural commentator

Once again, this is not a flesh-and-blood battle, but a spiritual one. This strife and division in our nation also grants us another opportunity as the church of Jesus Christ to demonstrate to the world what real love and unity looks like. By this, the world will know we are His disciples (John 13:35).

Phil Strout, Vineyard USA national director

What we just witnessed in Charlottesville is one of the evil things that stalks our nation. Hatred, racism and injustice must be met with love, listening, learning and repentance. There is no shortcut. I have to do my part; no passes on this.

Please join us in prayer as we continue to learn—together—how to live as Kingdom people in our generation and in our nation.

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