

Steve Hill's Spiritual Son: The Racists and Bigots of Charlottesville Need Us to Fight on Their Behalf

When your city is burning down around you, it's not time to grab a camera, but to bring a hose!

This weekend I grieved as I watched the chaos loosed in our streets. The racism, bigotry and hate that poured into the city of Charlottesville, Virginia is a reminder of how bad this nation desperately needs Jesus. Revival that leads to reformation is a responsibility that rests with us, the church.

Have you noticed that when these violent acts take place, there is always a predictable response? The news media comes with an army of reporters hoping to capture the carnage and as a consequence create ratings. The pundits and talking heads then begin to opine for days in hopes of keeping the fire burning. Soon the bloggers are behind their keyboards, hopping on the latest trending topic in hopes of a few more clicks and shares. The rest of us fall in line, tweeting and posting hashtags lest we feel shamed for silence.

Aren't you tired of the circus? I'm convinced it does nothing to change the course of a nation that is rapidly descending into the abyss. It only speeds the descent. This nation needs more praying and less posting.

Posts and hashtags do not change cities; we do. It's time we realize that if the city is burning, we can't just blame the person who threw the torch, but also the person who sat and watched it burn as well as those who withheld the water. There is more blame to go around than we realize.

Don't misunderstand. Yes, the man who threw the torch is guilty. This weekend white supremacists, racists and bigots came to a city and protested. The result was fatal and destructive. These people do not represent us, our nation or our faith. Their actions already stand condemned by the law and more importantly by God's word. Without repentance, they stand in danger of even more than the strong arm of the law: the wrath of God.

As Christ-followers, we must do more than denounce them. We must pray for them. Pray for them to come to know Jesus and repent lest they continue their trek to hell. They need more than our condemnation.

Pay close attention to what I'm about to say. They need us to fight on their behalf. To wage war against the darkness that has gripped them and contend for their salvation. They need to see and feel our love as we demonstrate Christ's love for them. Let us embrace the words so powerfully spoken by Martin Luther King Jr, "I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

However, let us not make the mistake of only blaming the man who started the fire. We must also hold accountable those who stood by and watched it burn. Did you notice the media was there ahead of time with cameras ready to broadcast these protests? They gave the attention-seekers millions of eyes to watch their mayhem. This fueled a fire that could've easily been extinguished by simply ignoring the tantrum. CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and the like may have won some ratings, but it was America who lost in the process. Media, you are not without blame for what has taken place this weekend. America, wake up!

Next, we look toward the politicians who were quick to the camera, armed with fresh talking points, to advance their party's agenda. They started throwing blame, naming names and calling out one another in an attempt destroy the one another. Republicans and Democrats, please realize that you can both be

traveling in the wrong direction on the right and left side of the road,

Let us be clear, when you choose to profit from evil, even when that evil is perpetrated by another, you become complicit in that evil. Politician and pundit, you say, “Never let a crisis go to waste” and “If it bleeds, it leads”. You chose to use this as an occasion to build your ratings, brand, side, party or agenda. Shame on you! You are not innocent.

Here is a sound piece of wisdom for any with ears willing to hear. The best thing you and I can do for our nation, city and family is to turn off the radio and television. Ignore the bullies and likewise ignore the media and the politician. Deny them the attention and stop empowering them. Stop letting them divide us for their own profit.

Finally, let us not excuse the one who withholds the water when the fire is burning. Oh my friend, we, the church, are not blameless in this. There are deep places we have failed our nation and neighbor. Posts, tweets and hashtags are too easy. It’s easier to denounce another man’s hatred on social media, far harder to truly love one another with a Christlike love.

I pray we wake up and realize that we, the church, play the single largest role in shaping the destiny of our nation—that is, if we will embrace it. It’s time we pray our eyes would be opened to the plank that resides there rather than the splinter we see in another.

My friend, this weekend, a few hundred unified racists set the national dialogue. None of us likes their message, but we certainly heard it. There truly is power in unity, even when that unity is centered around hate and anger.

Imagine if a few million Christians countered with a unified message of love. Would that not have more impact? If only we realized the power we steward within our cities, when we come

together as one. God is not looking for another church in your city, He is looking for one!

It is my heartfelt prayer that the church in Charlottesville will come together and stand with one voice in absolute solidarity. Imagine how different this weekend could have been if all the Charlottesville churches simply decided to be one church.

I am convinced if every church in a city would humbly lay down their petty differences, take their eyes off building their own ministries and focus wholeheartedly upon the kingdom, we would see reformation within the week. Oh, the power when every believer in your city stands together, speaks together and holds all things as common (Acts 4:32). What a difference that would make indeed. In fact, the longer we choose to remain divided, the longer division will tear our cities apart.

Some will say I'm being naive. I say you should have such childlike faith. The fact that our cities are immoral or falling into chaos is as much an indictment on us as it is them. Again, hashtags and posts don't change cities; we do.

Evil is not defeated with evil. Hate is not trumped with hate. The only way to conquer hate is with love, division with unity and hostility with humility.

So how should we respond? I can't speak for you, only myself. I'll be the first falling to my knees and repenting for where I myself have failed to unify. I repent for where I have divided and spoken against my fellow believers. I am sorry for where I have contributed to the chaos and thrown fuel upon the destructive fires. I am choosing to make a greater effort to love my neighbor, no matter how different from me they are. I choose to show uncommon grace and love to all.

Further, if you are ready to stand in solidarity, I am offering my hand to help. You say you want to heal your city,

I'll bring the bandages along with the hose. Church, we are at our best when we stand united within our communities. We will get there, either through humility or humiliation. Our united voice is needed at this moment. Truth must resound within these streets lest they burn to the ground. There is no need to look elsewhere. The answer already rests within.