

We Must Bind the Spirit Behind Political Violence

Some politicians tell us the crime rate is dropping in the United States, but you wouldn't know that from looking at the violence that has erupted during this presidential election season. We are a bitterly divided nation. Tempers are boiling. Last week President Biden called all people voting for Donald Trump "garbage," and New York governor Kathy Hochel said anyone not voting with her Democrat Party is "anti-American."

Hateful rhetoric has a way of fueling more hate—which might be the reason so many people have been threatened, bloodied, shot or hospitalized during campaign events. Consider:

- Last week a man in Bath, New York, entered a grocery store and attacked a man because he was wearing a Trump hat. The assailant, Robert Yott, didn't know the victim, but he punched him in the head several times and broke some of his teeth. Yott has been charged with felony assault.

- Last April, a man with a sledgehammer attacked a 64-year-old Trump supporter in a tire store in Pennsylvania. The victim, who was known for driving around town in a van decorated with Trump signs, had to be taken by helicopter to a hospital because of multiple head wounds.

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- In June in Fall River, Massachusetts, a 27-year-old man named Aidan Courtright approached an elderly Trump supporter who was holding a political sign. Courtright ripped the sign out of the man's hands, screamed at him, threw the man to the ground and then kicked him. The victim, who was 82, was hospitalized.

– Democrats have also been victimized by political violence. Last month, the leader of a pro-Israel group within the Democratic Party was bloodied and threatened by a group of anti-Israel protesters in New York City. Later in October, an 18-year-old Trump supporter in Florida brandished a machete and threatened to harm two elderly Kamala Harris supporters.

– And of course we know that Trump has survived at least two assassination attempts. A 20-year-old man attempted to shoot him from a rooftop during Trump's July 13, 2024, rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Then another man plotted to shoot the former president while he was golfing near his home in West Palm Beach, Florida. After both incidents, some Harris supporters posted on social media that they were sad that the shooters missed their aim.

There have been calls from both political parties to calm down the rhetoric and to heal our divisions, but I'm not holding my breath. It feels as if we are on the brink of civil war—and who knows what will happen this week if there are razor-thin margins or disputes about mail-in ballots, noncitizen voters or election tampering. May the God of peace help us!

Our founders wanted a country where all citizens have the freedom to express their opinions without the threat of violence. They devised a government of the people and for the people, where transitions of power can be peaceful and where cool heads prevail, even when divisions exist. But it feels as if we have abandoned those core beliefs. Because we have fallen away from God, it feels as if we are splitting into two nations, one red and one blue, just like Judah and the northern kingdoms divided in the days of King Rehoboam.

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But I refuse to lose hope. Even though we see torn families,

divided communities and signs of despair all around us, we are also in a season of repentance and renewal. Students are turning to Christ on our campuses. New churches are being planted. The Holy Spirit is visiting His people. This is not a time to give up. It is a time to pray.

Paul reminded the Ephesians that we have authority over demonic forces. Rather than inciting violence against people, Paul called Christians to put on our spiritual armor and to attack the invisible armies of hell that seek to destroy and divide us. The apostle said: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, NASB 1995).

As you pray for America in this crucial hour, please also use the mighty name of Jesus to bind the spirit of violence and division that seeks to destroy us. Here's how I am praying:

Lord Jesus, you promised in Romans 16:20 that "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." The devil cannot claim victory over us because You have made us more than conquerors. We bind the demonic spirit of violence, hatefulness, assassination, rioting, vandalism, arson and destruction in the name of Jesus.

Protect our cities. Protect all elected officials. Expose any terrorist plots, whether they are foreign or domestic. Deliver us from political conspiracies or any cheating or trickery in the polls. Let good triumph over evil. We pray for a peaceful transition of power after this 2024 election. We pray for God's "shalom"—the peace that comes from heaven to earth. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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