

Church, It's Time to Rise Up Against the Spirit of Intimidation

The spirit of intimidation is insidious, and it is on rampant display in every area of our lives. Mixed with the use of shame and a bullying spirit, the spirit of intimidation is actually a tool of terror.

Today, if you merely have a difference of opinion regarding a social issue, a political opinion, stores you patronize or your take on free speech, know this: If your opinion does not reflect the authorized convictions of today, you will be shouted down, put out of business or perhaps put in the hospital.

As one commentator said regarding the *modus operandi* of today, "Rage is all the rage!" Yep, and it is sanctioned, encouraged and even rewarded.

I just heard a pathetic rant from two crazed Congresspeople who were advocating mischief and insurrection in America just because their beliefs were different. It wasn't a simple disagreement; it was rage. It sounds different; and at times, devilishly so.

Case in point, it is this type of insane rage that has our friend and congressman [Rep. Steve Scalise] still struggling for his life. But it should not surprise you. It is the byproduct of prolonged, intentional, incendiary language, topped with a winking, "If you don't like it, blow it up" mindset.

Yesterday, as I drove past the office of one of our national elected officials, I saw a sight I've seen many times in the last six months. First, let me say, I'm a big free-speech fan,

and I am ever reminded and respectful of the price paid for its precious exercise. But what I saw was not respectful, and it was more than just a petulant juvenile, chest-beating, bravado display. No, it was a frenzied implementation of unhinged myopic rage.

The screams, the silly signs and the distorted faces drowned out any good opinion they may have had. And since they had flushed all of their manners and credibility, they decided to make trouble. That's not free speech. That's nuts.

In one of the greatest ironies of today, the University of California in Berkeley, the heart of the campus Free Speech Movement, now wants to control any speech that might be "uncomfortable" (meaning Christian, Jewish or pro-American speeches deemed offensive to the "sensitive" ones). But it is still OK to break windows, taunt police, tear up buildings and set cars on fire.

Yes, I realize kooks should be able to have a voice, too. But the spirit of this, along with the anarchy mindset of today, is now deeper and way darker. This is the spirit that is loose today. It is a spirit of assassination, not assimilation.

Assassination is not just bullets that kill, but also words, ideology and intimidation to paralyze, tear down and destroy. Our universities and our airwaves are riddled with such.

This spirit of intimidation is as old as man himself. In fact, it was the tool of choice as the serpent slithered around the tree toward Adam and Eve. His directed words to question, demean, obstruct and intimidate them put the first man and woman back on their heels and then into despair. And still today, none of us are immune to such concentrated meanness.

In all walks of life, the spirit of intimation still rolls along, sadly, even in churches.

Just a few days ago, I ran into two good folks whom I had not

seen in a few Sundays. I hugged them and told them I missed their smiling faces. Then, these sweet ones, in an embarrassed delicate manner, communicated their frustration in dealing with (in my words) intimidation. Not knowing how to stand up or ignore it, the bullying spirit from an outsider proved too overwhelming and had taken them out of the Lord's house. I didn't scold or demean them; I just spoke peace, blessing and encouragement to them and then opened the door wider!

Dear ones, in this era of intimidation and in this age of rage, don't be intimidated and don't be afraid. Stay strong, faith-filled and in the Word. Don't let anything intimidate you. That's devilish, and God's not in that! {eoa}

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