



## THE COVERING

### Crying Out to Stop Violence in Philadelphia as Never Before

*Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. Isaiah 60: 18 ESV*

As of the end of April 2021, there have been 169 homicides in Philadelphia, up 36% from this time last year and twice what it was five years ago. This has caught the attention of the national news, put city government and policing in the spotlight and motivated more prayer than ever before, in the prayer closet, on Zoom calls and in the streets. It's also prompted the emergence of activists, a deeper examination of the roots of violence and mobilization of grassroots strategies to address them.

This compilation of prayer points illustrates some of the complexities of the issue and the "open doors" through which the enemy of God has sought to sabotage His plans, destroy the destinies of His people and render us hopeless, not knowing how we, as individuals, can possibly make a difference in the fight against such an enemy. Yet, we can make a difference – if we are hungry enough. James Goll, in an article entitled "Can Man Move God's Hand?" said:

As I see it, there seems to be a period of time . . . for us to become so desperate that we turn our frustration into hunger. Hunger rightly expressed becomes a cry before the Lord, a form of intercession that calls for the fulfillment of prophetic promises (such as in Isaiah 60: 18). Hunger becomes a magnet that draws forth the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit to invade the natural realm.

Thus, as we commit to praying about the violence in our city – like we have never prayed before – let us first make sure our hearts are right with God, repenting for any of our attitudes and actions that are not aligned with Him, for the ways we have presumed or judged others or failed to extend mercy and compassion, and tolerated the conditions that contribute to violence when we might have been able to make a difference. Then let us purpose love for all by our intention to bless and curse not that releases each person touched by violence, whether victim or victimizer, into the fullness of their destiny through a covenant relationship with God through the Blood of His Son. And finally, focusing on those aspects of this issue to which Holy Spirit draws our attention and going deep in prayer with the expectation that God will move to heal, transform, restore and impart a hope and a future for Philadelphia and her people.

#### Spiritual Roots of Violence

- Powers and principalities over the city and region - Ephesians 6: 12, Daniel 10: 13
- Sins that have defiled the land - Genesis 4: 10-11
- Failure of the Church to uphold the standards of the Word of God, both through tolerance of or participation in of sin that, in turn, "filled the land with violence" by provoking God - Ezekiel 8, especially verse 17.
- Leviathan / pride and its manifestations that lead to violence (Unteachable, set in our ways, easily offended which lead to rejection and a victim mentality, that contribute to rebellion to authority and anger that gets acted out and leads to violence) - Proverbs 16: 18, Job 41: 34
- The shedding of innocent blood because "bloodshed follows bloodshed" - Hosea 4: 2
- Spirit of greed - Micah 2: 2
- Orphan spirit that imparts an identity of unworthiness – Ephesians 1: 5-6
- Spirit of violence / covenants with death / curses spoken over the city - Ezekiel 7: 23

#### "Natural" Roots of Violence

- Lack of a nurturing environment growing up - Proverbs 22: 6
- The hopelessness of poverty - Proverbs 31: 8
- Exposure to violence and ungodly behavior at home, in school, through TV and social media - 2 Timothy 4: 2-5

- Pandemic related factors such as boredom and isolation resulting from lockdown - 1 Peter 5: 7
- Getting identity from social media - 1 Corinthians 15: 33 ESV
- Influence of “drill music” (Chicago trap music with “dark, violent and nihilistic lyrical content and ominous beats”) - Mark 4: 24

### **Societal Impact and Responsibility**

- Protection for the innocent before they become victims - Psalm 140: 4, Psalm 12
- Compassion and understanding for victims and others touched by violence - Psalm 28: 7
- Ongoing support network in addition to victim’s services provided by police and DA’s office.
  - For instance: prayer partners - Romans 12: 15; family mentors - 1 Peter 5: 1-2; trauma counseling - Psalm 107: 13-16
- Establish a “clearinghouse” to match needs to resources - Philippians 4: 19
  - For instance: increased training and support for young at-risk parents, increased investment in early intervention and education, mentoring programs, opportunities to hope: exposure to new locations, life-styles, financial opportunities, exposure to paths out of poverty . . .
- Private and public funding for community organizations that have more impact than “big-money” initiatives - Hebrews 13: 16
- Reduction / elimination of the influences that lead to violent behavior -
  - For instance: No vision / no hope for a future / hardened hearts; lack of identity as sons of God that makes us vulnerable to what satisfies the flesh / dulls the pain / provides a community of acceptance; drugs and alcohol, influenced of social media, “Life is game” attitude; neighborhood “territory” / gangs as identity; lack of consistent role models - Proverbs 13: 20; lack of emotional maturity and conflict resolution skills - Deuteronomy 21: 18
- Pray for justice for victims and co-victims - Luke 18: 7-8; repentance and the fear of the Lord for the perpetrators - 1 Thessalonians 5: 22, Isaiah 11: 1-5; and salvation and fulfilled destiny for all - Jonah 3: 7-8, 2 Corinthians 7: 10

### **Governmental Role**

- God inspired ideas for the mayor and all others involved in strategizing the city’s response to violence - Psalm 2: 10-11 CEV
- Protection for those on the frontlines - Psalm 140: 4
- Training to deal with confrontations - Proverbs 15: 1
- Increased private funding for promising grassroots initiatives - Proverbs 10: 22
- No over-reaction on the part of the criminal justice system as a result of the increased violence that penalizes those in the system for what they didn’t do - Leviticus 19: 15

### **Church Role**

- Repentance for any attitudes and actions that have prevented the Church from being part of the solution - Acts 17: 30
- The Church become who she is supposed to be and Christians taking the authority God has given us to deal with the power of the enemy - Luke 10: 19, Ezekiel 33: 1-7, Psalm 132: 4
- Training to prepare victim support mentors and trauma counselors - 2 Timothy 3: 17
- Churches in the streets, building relationship / community, blessing people, and meeting needs - Luke 10: 5-9

### **Decrees and Declarations**

- I release the spirit of adoption as sons of God to replace the orphan spirit - Romans 8: 15
- The Glory of the Lord is displacing the demons and the darkness - Ezekiel 43: 1-9
- Violence shall no more be heard in our land, devastation or destruction within our borders; we shall call our walls Salvation, and our gates Praise - Isaiah 60: 18
- The evil of the wicked shall come to an end and righteousness be restored - Psalm 7: 9
- Peace and security are within our borders - Psalm 122: 7
- I release discernment, understanding and wisdom on those in authority, including policemen - Isaiah 11: 2