



The 16th Street Baptist Church

By Sister April Burwell

Day 15
March 10, 2023

Read I Peter 5:7

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Critical Race Facts!

In 1963, four young girls were killed when the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed and that year, more than 700 Black children protesting racial segregation in the City were arrested, blasted with fire hoses, clubbed by police, and attacked by police dogs.

Closely mirroring the era of lynching, police in Mississippi facilitated the extrajudicial murders of civil rights workers Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner in 1964 by delivering the men to a white mob after detailing them for an alleged traffic violation. A mob of Ku Klux Klansmen, who had gathered during the several hours the three young men were held in jail, was ready and waiting to seize and murder them upon release. Just as lynching had been justified in the preceding decades. These violent incidents were defended as necessary to maintain “law and order.”

Today’s Prayer Concerns:

Lord, we thank You for the care and comfort of our community and congregation. Help us to permeate them with Your love, mercy and grace. In Jesus Name, amen.

Birmingham, Alabama was the most segregated city in the United States in 1963. It wanted to be desegregated, and with the help of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Birmingham received national attention. The members of 16th Street Baptist Church, however, didn’t want this type of attention. There were racial tensions and white hostility towards the civil rights movement in Birmingham. 16th Street quickly came to be viewed as a gathering place for civil rights activists.

I learned that in Birmingham, because of its campaign to launch the most segregated city to be desegregated caused violence and riots, but Romans 8: 31 NIV says, “What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Even though Birmingham was known as “Bombingham” because there had been about 60 unsolved bombings with no one arrested for any of them, it did not stop the city from pursuing what they wanted of being desegregated. On May 10, 1963, the city agreed to desegregate some things such as lunch counters, restrooms and drinking fountains, but white segregation and violence remained prevalent in the city. The fight was not over!

On September 15, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama, at the 16th Street Baptist Church, a horrific, racist act was carried out by white supremacist. On that Sunday, a bomb targeted and killed four little girls. Why this church you might ask? The 16th Street Baptist Church was a large and prominent church located downtown, just blocks from Birmingham’s commercial district and City Hall. It served as the centerpiece of the city’s African American community. It functioned as a meeting place, social center and lecture hall. Its size and location were of importance to the Black community because it served as headquarters for civil rights mass meetings and rallies in the early 1960s. The 16th Street Baptist Church was an obvious target.

The city of Birmingham had been through a lot leading up to the attack of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. The 16th Street Baptist Church bombing marked a turning point in the United States during the civil rights movement. To the four precious little girls, Addie Mae, Denise, Carole and Cynthia we will continue to share your story to let everyone know what you endured and that you four did not deserve to die a tragic death at such an early age. Today a national park site commemorates the critical civil rights history that happened there. Never give up, stand up for what you believe in, fight for what you want, Trust God and always have Faith.

Questions to Ponder:

Name a time that you lived in fear. How did you deal with it? Because of the work of our ancestors, name some of the fears you have never had to deal with.

