

ELECTION: Why Most Charismatics Will Vote for Donald Trump

When Pastor Paula White-Cain walked to the podium in Amway Center in Orlando, Florida, on June 18, 2019, the stands were filling up, and the crowd was teeming with excitement, though it would be another two hours before President Trump would announce he was running for reelection.

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She quoted President Trump as saying, “We worship God, not government,” as a segue into her prayer. After invoking the name of Jesus and thanking God for the “great United States,” the president and God’s blessings, she prayed, “Father, You have raised President Trump up for such a time as this,” and invoked blessings from Psalms and the book of Daniel about revealing “the secrets and the deep things” to the president. Then she began to come against “principalities and powers”—terminology rarely heard or understood outside the walls of a charismatic or Pentecostal church.

“Let every evil veil of deception of the enemy be removed from people’s eyes in the name which is above every name, the name of Jesus Christ,” she prayed. “You said in Your Word . . . in Ephesians 6:12, that “We are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The respected charismatic teacher Dutch Sheets who watched the

rally via livestream told me: “I have never seen anything like that on TV. I literally sat there with my mouth hanging open. I couldn’t believe she had the boldness to do that or was allowed to do it. It was as if she drew a line in the sand spiritually.”

Light versus darkness. Good versus evil. God’s plan versus the enemy’s destructive agenda. The Spirit-breathed plans of God versus the enemy’s deceitful agenda.

This binary worldview, held by virtually all Spirit-filled Christians, played a major role in electing Donald J. Trump as president in 2016. Now, four years later, the spiritual battle lines have been drawn, and the stakes are even higher.

We live in a time where anarchists in some cities have been running amok for weeks on end, assaulting police officers and setting fire to federal buildings. The COVID-19 threat continues, and one of the strongest economies since World War II was sucker punched by the novel coronavirus from China, leaving over 16 million Americans out of work this summer.

Toss a presidential election year into the mix, and small wonder charismatic and Pentecostal believers are on their knees praying for revelation over how they should respond.

To understand the charismatic support for President Trump, you need to flash back to 2011. You probably have never heard that story, unless you’ve read my recent books *God, Trump, and the 2020 Election* and *God, Trump, and COVID-19*.

The story begins like this: Trump the real-estate and entertainment mogul called Paula White-Cain, who he had come to consider a “spiritual adviser,” to say he was thinking about running for president. He asked her to bring together several leading preachers to pray over whether he should toss his hat in the ring in 2012 for the presidency.

Evangelist Kenneth Copeland told me later: “They prayed for

over six hours—just stayed on their knees before God for six hours.” The verdict from the group was that the time wasn’t right. Who knows if that factored into his decision not to run in 2012? But four years later, Trump called together the same group of praying pastors who became an early version of his evangelical advisory group.

Copeland told me, “This is the Donald Trump people don’t know anything about.” It’s a candidate who seemed to enjoy being prayed for and values input from Christian leaders. Often someone would take a picture or a video on their cellphone, and it would go viral. This was before Trump began to get traction as a candidate and when most “evangelicals” were still supporting several candidates with better bona fide “evangelical credentials” such as Gov. Mike Huckabee or Gov. Bobby Jindal. Even Sen. Mark Rubio and Sen. Ted Cruz are the type of candidates evangelicals could point to and say: “He’s one of us.”

But Trump was anything but “one of us.” For years, he was well-known as a New York playboy and TV celebrity. Plus he had too many wives, an unpresidential style and involvement in casinos. Mainstream media commentators label any Christian who supports Trump a hypocrite because, of course, Christians don’t approve of such things.

It’s a curious double standard: Left-leaning politicians face virtually no litmus test on traditional moral issues, while social conservatives are told they should abandon their candidate if they fall short of being a saint.

However, something curious began to happen. These charismatic leaders saw the problems in America as deeper than policy issues such as if there is too much debt or whether we spend enough on education or the military or the infrastructure. Those may be important issues but are not at the core of the problems in America.

Over the years, “evangelical leaders” were invited to sit at the table of mostly Republican presidents. They were promised that issues important to conservative Christians would be championed, but little happened. Charismatics and Pentecostals were rarely seen in those invited “to the table” with so-called evangelical leaders.

Maybe because charismatics have always felt out of the mainstream, they were drawn to a candidate out of the mainstream who actually seemed to welcome them and was open to be prayed for. And several began to sense that maybe this unlikely candidate was being raised up by God.

Also, because we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives, when we began to hear that Donald Trump was open spiritually, we began to believe maybe God could raise him up, flaws and all.

The Bible, of course, is replete with examples of imperfect, flawed leaders whom God raised up to serve—a point I make in my book *God, Trump, and the 2020 Election*. No, a puritan morality isn’t a fair test of a president’s integrity. The real fitness test of a political leader is whether they fulfill or renege on the campaign promises that got them elected.

By that standard, the inside-the-Beltway political establishments of both parties have failed. For a generation, they have dangled bright shiny promises before the eyes of the electorate without actually accomplishing much.

- Supreme Court justices.
- Right to life.
- Support for Israel.
- Energy independence.
- Immigration and border security.
- Deregulation.
- Religious freedom.

One suspects the real reason the Left hates President Trump is he did what he said he would do.

As the intolerant “cancel culture” gains strength as never before, I believe we must light a fire under the Christian community to turn out the vote. Otherwise, I fear life as we’ve known it in America may end, and the persecution of Christians and others who oppose the Leftist agenda will begin.

Trump and COVID-19

In the eyes of the Left and the media, the Trump administration has done nothing right in its battle against this modern-day plague that originated in Wuhan, China. Indeed, the same week Democrats were trying to impeach him, he banned travel from China. As late as Jan. 14, the Chinese were still saying the disease could not be transmitted from human to human.

Trump’s bold decision incensed the entrenched establishment forces determined to cancel his presidency. Activists on the Left screamed that he was “xenophobic.” The truth is, the president’s quick action implementing the travel ban from China on Jan. 31, and then from Europe in mid-March, probably saved thousands of lives.

Once the wisdom of Trump’s decision was clear, the Left began trashing him by insisting he did too little too late to counter the virus. My own theory is that those on the Left want to drag this out as long as they could, hoping the economy is so bad that something weird may happen and their weak and ill-equipped candidate Joe Biden may slip into office on Election Day. They have such a deep lust for power that they’d rather have the economy screech to a halt, leaving millions to file for unemployment, if that’s what it takes to win in November.

Perhaps the Left fears a second Trump term would restore

citizens' faith in the American dream, and that protecting our God-given freedoms remains the key to our prosperity.

The Spiritual Battle

Some saw the 2016 election results, and the events that followed, as a political revolution. Many Spirit-filled conservative Christians, however, saw it as a cultural counter-revolution and an answer to prayer.

Evangelist James Robison told me that in 2016, "a lot of Christians were praying that we wouldn't lose freedom, that we would not lose the opportunities this nation offers with the protections and safeguards and government functioning as a protector, and not potentially replacing God and our love for one another.

Secular pundits saw Trump's victory only as a battle between Democrat and Republican, or between the Left and the Right. But Robison saw it as a supernatural spiritual battle—as I do.

"What happened," he told me, "is that God overpowered the foolishness of political correctness and the liberal (not just deceived but possessed) Left, which is far too often dead-set against a biblical worldview and against America's traditional Judeo-Christian ethics. But they were being totally pushed back."

Trump's win served as evidence to believers that their prayers were being answered. We Christians believe this pandemic did not catch God by surprise. We believe He hears and answers prayer. I personally believe He gave us our president for such a time as this.

President Trump's foes are relentless, and they attempt to wear down anyone who supports him. One example is Trump's battle to get hydroxychloroquine into the hands of doctors on the front lines. According to some studies and many doctors, the drug has been quite effective.

For me, the stakes in this year's election became crystal clear on Monday, March 30, when my longtime friend Pastor Rodney Howard-Browne (who is originally from South Africa and calls himself a missionary to America) was arrested and booked into a local jail. His crime? Holding Sunday worship services at The River at Tampa Bay Church. He was charged with unlawful assembly and violating the county's stay-at-home order.

The media loved this story—"crazy Pentecostal pastor" endangers the health of his church members by recklessly disregarding governmental edicts for nonessential gatherings of more than 10 people. But the case brought up some interesting legal issues. Are churches, which have constitutional rights for freedom of worship, "essential" in the midst of this coronavirus crisis?

Mat Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel, came to Howard-Browne's defense. The results were amazing. Staver sued for violation of the church's constitutional rights to freedom of religion and freedom of assembly, and the county dropped the case. On Charisma News, we published an op-ed by Liberty Counsel stating its position in the case, and my *Strang Report* podcast with Pastor Rodney was one of the most-listened-to episodes of the year. What happened to Pastor Rodney should be a wake-up call for us all.

What happened in 2016 was a direct response to the prayers of the righteous here in America and beyond. It was a last-minute reprieve! It was a period where God was willing to show His mercy, His grace and His love and give us just a little more time.

Jeremiah Johnson, a rising prophetic voice from Charlotte, North Carolina, told me in a podcast: "There's a real recipe for awakening, especially in America. Some of the greatest 'gods'—sports, entertainment—are being shut down. Schools are being closed, which is forcing needed relational proximity for marriages and families. Large churches and conferences are

being canceled, which allows for house-to-house gatherings like the book of Acts. So I believe around the time of Passover, we're going to see [the virus] really slow down, but I believe in the midst of this, there's a divine reset. There's a recipe for awakening."

This reprieve was granted not only to the American people, but to the American church. Our mandate was simple: *Do not* act as if it's business as usual. God wanted us to repent as a nation and as a church! To begin to lead the culture again in accordance with the truth of the Word of God. To once again stand for righteousness and push back against the demonic agenda we were under so we could change the trajectory in which this nation was headed.

Now, as we look back at the last four years, has the American church fulfilled its part of the bargain? Have we risen up in prayer, fasting and standing for righteousness? Have we been outspoken from the pulpit and pushed back against the assignment of the enemy to morally bankrupt our culture and attack our children's minds and identities? Have we made progress in taking our country back from falling off the moral abyss? Have we in the Spirit-filled community done enough?

Two Opposing Futures

I believe the moment of truth will soon be upon us, as there are two very different possible scenarios ahead. I am concerned that if Trump loses, our reprieve as a nation and church could be over. God has given us four years of grace so we could be about His business! If that grace period comes to an end, I believe that will be a direct rebuke to the church and the fact that we didn't do enough, despite the tremendous grace He showed us. Instead, if we, in fact, did continue with business as usual and basically lost our blessing period, ushering in a period of great sorrow and woe, it may be even worse than the Great Depression.

Many noncharismatic evangelicals agree with me that there is a segment of liberal evangelicals who tend to vote Democratic every election cycle who now have come out as “Never Trumpers.” The media loves to cover what they say against the president.

Also, because the Black community traditionally votes Democratic, many Pentecostal Black preachers and their members may still vote for Biden-Harris this time. But I’ve noticed they don’t tend to speak up because they really don’t embrace the anti-church, anti-God stances of many far Left Democrats. And as I document in a chapter in *God, Trump, and the 2020 Election* called “Black Americans, Democrats and Trump,” that is beginning to change. It will be interesting to see how many end up voting for Trump for the same reasons I do.

I cannot stress enough the importance of the time period we are in right now! God responds directly to the prayers of the righteous! We have seen this consistently throughout the Bible and history. What we do right now is utterly important! Will we respond in a manner that pleases the Lord?

Many Christians have not even understood the importance and spiritual relevance of this reprieve season of grace. Instead of activating, many have been focused on the wrong things or remained in a spiritual stupor. Others have looked to the president to make the needed changes.

The question is: Have we really done what God has asked of us? Is it too late already? Or can we still step up and make our impact now?

For years, we in the Bible-believing community have talked about our nation’s need for revival. The question many believers are asking today is, could the devastation of COVID-19 lead to a new spiritual awakening in America? It’s notable that America’s first two Great Awakenings, around the time of the American Revolution and later during the Civil

War, arrived during periods of struggle and hardship.

It will take a huge spiritual revival for the country to truly change. But the cancel culture is threatening to cancel people one by one. If people are canceled, how can they have a voice and influence others? What if we lost Christian TV? What if churches started to be closed?

God has placed this message heavily on my heart for a reason! His question remains: Will you respond? This is a moment of great decision. What we do and what happens next will determine a lot.

I do believe spiritual warfare is at work in our world, and God has given us a reprieve for a reason. His desire is that we repent and turn from our wicked ways. He wants the church to wake up and understand the true battle at hand. We are meant to lead the culture, to be the head and not the tail.

I believe if we were to repent, we could see a great revival in this nation. But again, we first need to understand that our problem is not Donald Trump; our problem is us.

We need to see how far this nation, and the church in this nation, have strayed from our first love, Jesus Christ! God has given us some time. What will we do with it?

That time may be shorter than we think. It is not business as usual. Now is the time for us to rise up and be the church. Our very future depends on it.

Stephen Strang *is founder of Charisma. His recent books, God, Trump, and the 2020 Election and Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World are available on . Listen to his podcast, The Strang Report, each Tuesday and Thursday on the Charisma Podcast Network.*