

Do Conservative Christians Have the Love of Christ for Obama and Hillary?

Along with many other conservatives, I believe Barack Obama has been one of our worst presidents, and I dread the thought of a Hillary Clinton presidency. I believe both of them have damaged our country in significant ways, and I steadfastly oppose some of their most cherished policies.

But that does not give me permission to despise them as human beings or to have a visceral hatred for them. God forbid.

Yet attitudes like this are all too common in our conservative Christian circles, circles which could better be described as "CONSERVATIVE christian," circles in which those whom we oppose can be vilified in the name of righteousness.

We feel justified in mocking their appearance or denigrating their families or criticizing them for the most minor infraction, and we do it because we have moved from opposing their destructive policies to despising them as people, as if they deserve our self-righteous scorn.

We're even happy to see Hillary have another coughing fit on the latest YouTube video. Maybe we'll retweet it and add a snappy comment too. After all, she's wicked! And just look at that pathetic pants suit!

I wonder how the Lord feels about all this? I wonder if we have forgotten Paul's directive which stated, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Do you remember what Christopher Hitchens wrote when Rev. Jerry Falwell died? Hitchens referenced Falwell's "carcass" and proclaimed, "Like many fanatical preachers, Falwell was

especially disgusting in exuding an almost sexless personality while railing from dawn to dusk about the sex lives of others.” Hitchens opined that, “The evil that he did will live after him,” then ended his article by stating, “It’s a shame that there is no hell for Falwell to go to”

Yet Hitchens felt perfectly justified in expressing these ill-timed sentiments because he judged Falwell to be evil.

Are we no better than this deceased atheist?

More recently, with the passing of conservative icon Phyllis Schlafly, hostile voices began to pile on, with tweets like these: “On the one hand it’s a shame Phyllis Schlafly died, but on the other, it’s always heartwarming when Satan calls one of his own home” (Jeb Lund, now with *Rolling Stone*); and “God never takes a Gene Wilder without relieving us of a Phyllis Schlafly” (Julie Klausner, with over 100,000 Twitter followers); and “We absolutely get to celebrate the passing of someone who worked for 70 years to reinforce oppressive, violent systems in this country” (Katie Klabusich, host of the *Katie Speak Show*).

How do you feel when you read these words, words which display such a deep disdain for Schlafly that they were posted the same day she died?

It’s one thing for her ideological opponents to oppose her while she’s alive and to hold to those differences after her death, but to mock her on the day of her death is to cross an ugly line.

Yet the truth be told, some “conservative Christians” would have a hard time restraining their glee if something tragic happened to President Obama or candidate Clinton. *After all*, we think to ourselves, *they are terrible people who are hurting our great nation*. And so we justify our sinful attitudes in the name of righteous indignation.

A black pastor told one of my white colleagues that when he and his friends hear someone criticizing Obama, it's as if that person was criticizing their own son.

I have found that comment to be useful, and so, while I speak forcefully and freely about my staunch disagreements with our president, always do so with several things in mind: 1) he is the first African-American president, bringing a real sense of pride to many African-Americans, therefore I will speak carefully; 2) he is my president, like it or not, therefore I will speak with respect; and 3) I also want to say something redemptive, such as, "I'm praying that he will be our greatest president, but so far, he has been a terrible disappointment."

When Bill Clinton was president, I agreed with many of Rush Limbaugh's salvos against him, but I would never call him "Slick Willy," as Rush famously did (and does). Yet other conservative Christians had no problem echoing these words, believing that Clinton's failings deserved such scorn, even saying things like, "Jesus called Herod a fox (Luke 13:32), so I can call Clinton Slick Willy."

They conveniently forgot that they were far closer to the character of Clinton than to the character of Jesus.

I'm all for denouncing what I believe to be the sinful policies of Obama and Hillary, as well as exposing and rebuking corruption wherever it is found (including Hillary's email server). If someone's actions are wicked, we can brand them as such.

But let us do so with a heart that longs to see these leaders transformed by God's love, that prays for them as we would pray for a family member, that is determined to walk in undefiled light, and that recognizes that we too have failings that call for repentance and contrition.

We can do that if we put CHRISTIAN first and conservative second; we will fail miserably if we reverse the two.