

How Donald Trump Is the Christian Hero We Never Expected

I was not surprised when Hillary Clinton declared that she believed people like me to be “deplorable.” I could not tell you exactly when it started, but it has been clear to me and I believe most evangelicals, that the hard left has been long engaged in a war with all that is Constitutional, conservative and Christian.

As the mayor of the city of El Cajon, California, just outside of San Diego, I live in a small outpost of conservatives, traditionalists and many Christians, who are surrounded by the left as Israel is surrounded by the Arab world. In my small city, there are three megachurches and over a dozen smaller ones. As a group, we are committed and passionate about Jesus, family, conservatism and the rights and liberties guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Many are equally passionate about President Donald Trump.

It has not always been so. I remember, before the primary presidential election of 2016, very few of us were excited about a Trump candidacy. The thought of Trump championing the evangelical cause was laughable. He had been divorced twice, bragged about groping women and was likely just a New York liberal posing as a Republican. He was brash, wealthy and combative, and it seemed very likely that he would not be, could not be, the man we would vote for.

When he ascended to the top of the ticket, I remember many making wild “Never Trump” announcements about not voting, or even voting for Hillary. This of course was just posturing, as anyone could see that Hillary was so deeply intertwined with the Christian-hating, Constitution-torturing extreme left that

to elect her would be akin to electing Nero. Slowly, we adjusted to the unthinkable concept of voting for Trump and as a nation, we evangelicals did just that—by over 81 percent.

After the election, we collectively held our breath and waited. What was God up to? Were we doomed, or was there a spiritual jujitsu happening that would make a sinner like Trump a man after God's own heart? I've heard it said that no man can judge the spirituality of another, but any of us can be fruit inspectors. So what has been the fruit of this presidential administration?

Trump began by signing executive orders to protect religious liberty. He instructed the Department of Justice to issue guidelines protecting the religious liberties of people engaging with the Federal government. He put the IRS on notice that they could no longer harass conservative or faith-based organizations. He boldly fought for the repealing of the Johnson amendment, which uses the power of the IRS to intimidate pastors against speaking on political matters. He provided protections for health-care workers who had objections to providing abortions, transgender surgeries or any other job duty their faith would preclude.

By moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, he broke with decades of U.S. policy. This striking decision acknowledged not only the 3,000-year history of the Jewish people, but also their right to proclaim Jerusalem as their capital. This was another 2016 campaign promise fulfilled, like his vow to be tough on China and improve border security. With his relocation of the embassy, millions of Christians and Jews felt relieved and vindicated in light of Genesis 12:3, which, paraphrased, states that those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse her will be cursed.

American Christians watched with amazement as President Trump systematically rejected the bias of the established media and called into question their motives and tactics. Christians

have intuitively known that it is this same group that has systematically and relentlessly worked to root out religious values and voices from the public square. Like your big brother showing up just as you're being worked over by school yard bullies, Trump showed up and sent the unruly media mob scattering. He took on the very premise of the media and called them out on their bias. Christians felt protected and understood.

Arguably, left-leaning courts and their propensity to establish law, not interpret it, have been the most noticeable harbinger of the impending loss of American religious liberty. I once heard Pastor Jim Garlow say, "I fully expect to die in government housing." Garlow meant that before Trump, the direction of the highest court seemed to lead toward the persecution of people of faith, for speaking aloud the tenets of that faith. He, at that time, expected that in his civil disobedience, he would end up spending his last years in prison. So it was a fundamental shift when the president was successful in the placement of two conservative judges on the Supreme Court and dozens of other appointments to lesser courts. Christians could argue that the significance of this act alone makes the president a hero of Christians and conservatives alike.

But what about his sinfulness? Well, that is puzzling. If we were to design the perfect candidate to "Make America Great Again" we would surely choose a politician who was pastor-like, or a learned man of God. That's not who won the 2016 election. What if God, in His wisdom, had a different plan in mind? Could it not be that Trump is an imperfect man—like David, or Samson or Moses—and is still of profound use to God? Haven't we seen characters like Winston Churchill, whose accomplishments dwarfed the criticisms of their vices and manner? What limits does God have in choosing a leader or, for that matter, in anything? Does it condemn us in hypocrisy that we would ignore the faults of Donald Trump but revel in his

policies and accomplishments?

I think the answer is that choosing a president is not a hypothetical exercise, but a meaningful choice in the direction of our nation. In 2016, we had a choice between a well-established woman who claimed to be a Christian but was demonstrably committed to eradicating Christian rights and values, and an unruly man who said he was a Christian and pledged to protect those same values. The proof will always be in the results. Looking at this administration's actions and achievements thus far, I believe it is clear that the result of a Trump presidency is that the positions of people of faith have improved.

It is not hypocritical to be pleased with the improvement of Christian rights and the protection of Christian values, even if the man responsible for it is imperfect. The truth is that the left doesn't really care about Trump's moral failings. We know this because the left's heroes are routinely caught in the same sins and behaviors and often, they are much more heinous and profound. The left, however, shamelessly defends their own with vigor. Trump's vices are just the convenient fodder his enemies use as a straw-man argument in their relentless mission to destroy him. In truth, they could not care less about his sins; what bothers them are his accomplishments. {eo}

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