

Is Oval Office Prayer Time 'Heresy'?

Evangelical pastors who prayed for President Trump in the Oval Office last week say they were fulfilling a Scriptural command (1 Tim. 2:1-3) to pray for government leaders and not engaging in something that "borders on heresy."

The heresy charge comes from Rev. William Barber, a rising leftist pastor from North Carolina who has become a national religious voice in speaking against Donald Trump during his campaign and presidency.

On Saturday, Barber told MSNBC's Joy Reid that he believes the healthcare reform promoted by the president is "hypocrisy and sin" because it allegedly transfers wealth from the poor to "the greedy."

In light of such policies, Barber said that faith leaders should not pray for the president but challenge him.

"It is a form of theological malpractice that borders on heresy when you can p-r-a-y for a president and others while they are p-r-e-y-preying on the most vulnerable. You're violating the most sacred principles of religion," he said.

Barber criticized the praying pastors, saying, "What these leaders ought to be doing is challenging the president, challenging (Senator) McConnell and challenging (House Speaker) Ryan and challenging these senators and others and not trying to appease them. Instead they're acting like priests of the empire rather than prophets of God."

As CBN News reported last week, about two dozen evangelical leaders and pastors spontaneously prayed with President Trump in the Oval Office on July 10th during a day-long "listening session" with the Office of Public Liaison.

On Tuesday, several of the leaders defended the White House prayer time when asked by CBN News.

Tony Suarez, the executive vice president for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, said "our mandate to pray for leadership is not dictated by who holds any particular office. We are called to simply pray for all people and all leadership."

Johnnie Moore, a former senior vice-president at Liberty University, also cited the scriptural admonition to pray for leaders and said Barber was in error to assume that faith leaders are not confronting the president.

"How does he know we aren't also respectfully, thoughtfully challenging the administration on various issues of concern for us?" said Moore.

While he did not specifically address Barber's comments, Family Research Council president Tony Perkins spoke about the prayer time on his radio show "Washington Watch" on Monday night.

Perkins argued that men and women of faith should speak into the life of political leaders but also acknowledged the concern that there are those who just want access and won't deliver accountability.

"We should never desire a position over speaking truth," said Perkins. "We have to use those positions and opportunities to speak that truth."

Travis Weber, director of the Center for Religious Liberty at the Family Research Council, said the scriptural command to pray for leaders is non-negotiable, whether citizens agree with them or not. He also challenged the idea that praying for leaders means a lack of confrontation.

"Christians should always speak truth to power," he said, "yet

we can do this at the same time that we pray for God to bless the nation through the leaders He has appointed over us.”
{eoa}

Copyright The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc., All rights reserved.