

Should Trump Receive an Evangelical Mulligan in the Stormy Daniels Scandal?

President Trump has been attacked in the media over sexual accusations involving a porn actress, and as the scandalous claims persist, Christian leaders are divided on how to support him.

Two months after Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, famously said evangelicals are willing to give Trump a “mulligan” for his past transgressions, he tells CBN News he still feels the same way.

“My comment was in the context of, how do you explain evangelicals supporting the president,” Perkins told *CBN’s* Jenna Browder.

He says that in the general election it was either Trump, “who had a background that none of us could identify with or embrace, but he wrapped himself in the most conservative Republican party platform,” or Hillary Clinton, “who had a clear track record of taking positions contrary to what evangelicals want, most pro-abortion female out there.”

“At that point, I think what evangelicals did is that they said, ‘Okay we’ll give you another try. We will... we’ll try it,’” Perkins explained.

Perkins made the “mulligan” comment to *Politico* in a question about Stormy Daniels, the porn actress who claims to have had an affair with Trump back in 2006, a decade before his political career began.

There’s now a lawsuit and intensifying allegations, which Trump denies, in the Daniels case.

Still, Perkins said he thinks evangelicals will continue to support Trump given a couple of conditions.

“To date, what has the President done?” Perkins asked. “The president has not engaged, to our knowledge, and I think we would know, in any of the behavior that he did in the past, prior to the election. What he has done is he’s actually followed through on political promises.”

Perkins went on to draw the comparison between Trump and President Clinton.

“If the president were to begin to engage in behavior like Bill Clinton did in the Oval Office when he was president, I think very quickly you would see evangelical support evaporate,” he said.

“If this president were to stop keeping the promises that he made on the campaign trail and all of a sudden adopt a different approach, I think you would begin to see evangelical support diminish,” Perkins explained.

When it comes to the “mulligan” description of Trump’s actions, David Lane of The American Renewal Project disagrees. He told CBN News:

America is on a collision course between two competing religions: Christianity vs. Secularism. Each worldview is inherently expansive and evangelistic. One is true and the other is false. Although Secularism has been ruling America for the last two or three generations, there will be no reconciliation of opposites with God; one will ultimately end in the destruction of the other. With his shocking win on November 8, 2016, President Trump apparently is the vehicle the Lord provided to confront the false god of Secularism, political correctness and multiculturalism.

Lane likened Trump to Samson in the Bible, “an imperfect tool,

evidently willing to do what God's people are not."

In a statement to CBN News, Michael Gerson, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush and outspoken Trump critic, criticized evangelicals who continue to support Trump.

"I think that Donald Trump is following the Bill Clinton playbook—deny, delay, dismiss, discredit," Gerson said. "But while many evangelicals tried to hold Clinton to moral account, now many are complicit in Trump's strategy, because he holds more of their political views. This is shocking cynical. The Trump evangelicals may think they are being political realists. What they are actually doing is trashing the reputation of evangelicalism in the broader culture."

Erick Erickson, a conservative radio host and another Trump critic, called on evangelicals to pray for Trump in a statement to CBN News.

"The president's administration has done a lot of good for conservatives, but the Stormy Daniels story should remind us he, like all of us, struggles with sin," Erickson said.

"Unfortunately, there seem to be a great many evangelicals who are so excited by what they're getting from this president, they have forgotten to pray for his repentance. Too many evangelicals in the president's orbit are unwilling to call their friend to repent. Too many are trying to find ways to excuse him. The president's soul is at stake. He needs to repent, as do we all," he said.

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