

Why SBC's New President, Other Major Leaders Are Not Happy With Mike Pence's Speech

Vice President Mike Pence's speech at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting Wednesday has left some Christians unhappy, especially the newly chosen leader of the SBC.

Instead of focusing solely on faith, Pence delivered what some are calling a "full-blown campaign speech."

"When you look at the progress we've made over the last 500 days at home and abroad—a stronger America, a stronger economy, a stronger commitment to the God-given liberties enshrined in our Constitution— I think there's only one way you can sum up this administration: 500 days of promises made and promises kept," Pence said.

Pence went on to talk about President Donald Trump and his numerous achievements, many of which have been applauded by Christians, including efforts to restore free speech rights to pastors.

"The president and I believe that the freedom of speech should not end at the threshold of our churches and places of worship. This president has taken action to end enforcement of the Johnson Amendment and we will not rest until it is repealed," Pence said.

But the SBC's newly named president, J.D. Greear, and others are concerned that their denomination has become too closely associated with support for President Trump, and Greear wants them to be viewed by the public as being all about Jesus instead.

Greear issued a statement on Twitter saying:

“We are grateful for civic leaders who want to speak to our convention—but make no mistake about it, our identity is in the gospel and our unity is in the great commission. commissioned missionaries, not political platforms, are what we do.”

Trevin Wax, the director of Bibles & reference at LifeWay, wrote on Twitter, “I know the SBC has welcomed politicians on occasion going back 45 years but has there ever been a full-blown campaign speech like this one? #SBC18 #SBCAM18”

Here are a few more comments from Twitter.

Matt Smethurst, managing editor of The Gospel Coalition, writes: “Very disappointing news. Sends the wrong message and reinforces the perception that SBC = Republican. The gospel of King Jesus is not tied to any American political party. This confuses that.”

Nathan Montgomery, a Ph.D. student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, states: “So apparently I’ve now attended my first political rally ever, sadly it’s at the SBC Annual Meeting. Grieved at the division this will cause. Please know many in the room did not want this. I respect Pence, but the convention is not the place for politicking. #SBC18 #SBCAM18”

Though Pence did speak a lot about President Trump, he also had some powerful words about faith. {eoa}

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