

Donald Trump and Christians: What's the Attraction?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 22, 2020



I don't receive snail mail often these days, but I received a letter from longtime listeners to our class that was most kind, but concerned and asking for clarification regarding things I have said in recent months.

From the letter:

You have, I believe, tried to be careful in not expressing support for any one political party or nominee, and yet: (Getting right to the point of this letter) - Much to our dismay, it "seems" to us that you are a Trump supporter. We may be wrong. Personally, we know the choice was infinitely hard last election, but to us it is blatantly obvious Trump uses the devil's methods (to do God's work???) and calls them "perfect," "wonderful," etc. But here is our moral and spiritual dilemma:

1. WHY do so many Christians support Trump, who has so openly lied, verbally abused, sexually manhandled women, (proven from his own lips), and laughed at others? WHY?

2. Isn't Trump and his "I can do anything I want to" attitude heading us for big trouble? A one-man rule? He praises North Korea's president, and Russia's. Yet calls our own US Senators and lawmakers and service people or anyone who doesn't agree with him, bad names. And yes, I realize there are good and bad folks on all sides. But his repeated verbal abuse is sickening to me. We TEACH freedom. Does that mean we back a president who thinks he has the right to do what he chooses?

The same day that I read this letter, I read an article in *The Southern Tidings* (the Southern Union of the North American Division of SDA's monthly publication) entitled [***A Beast Not a Lamb***](#). The author noted that the beast arising out of the earth in Revelation 13 has "lamb-like horns," but it is not a lamb; it is a beast, meaning this power (a nation) will use the methods of earth's beastly governments - coercion and force - to compel its way. The article identifies this nation as the USA and goes on to suggest that Christian Nationalism will make the country a beast power. The author writes, "Nationalism and Patriotism are not the same thing," and goes on to state that patriots can love their country, but don't force their values on others. The article defines "Nationalism" as a movement that seeks to take control of government to force its politics, religion, or morals upon others; the author cites the Nazi party as an example of this.

Perhaps the listeners who wrote the letter above have the same concerns as *The Southern Tidings* article. And to be clear, I stand in solidarity with all parties that seek to protect our liberties - freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of religion - and political freedom. It is only in an atmosphere of liberty that love grows, that individuality can advance, that truth can spread, that people can develop their fullest potential and fulfill God's purposes. So let's be watchful to promote freedom and resist coercion and the erosion of our liberties - from whatever corner they appear.

A Closer Look

One of the concerns I have with *The Southern Tidings* article is how it seems to consider any nationalist movement today to be the same as the nationalism of Nazi Germany. The author doesn't seem to realize that words can change meaning over time - e.g., "gay" in the 1940s didn't mean what it means today. Indeed, I don't think the Major League Baseball team, the Washington Nationals, and their fans are promoting some form of Nazism.

Nationalism in Nazi Germany was, in reality, Socialism that became Authoritarianism, just as Socialism has done in every instance (Soviet Union, North Korea, Vietnam, China, Cuba, etc.). And the Socialism of Nazi Germany advanced with specific methods, initially with powerful rhetoric and promises of power to the people, followed by young people (college-age students) becoming loyalists, such as the so-called "Brownshirts" who were organized to disrupt opposing political movements by crowd intimidation (shouting down opposition) and inciting riots - all in order to silence opposition voices. Today, we see similar methods being used not by the Christian right, but by the Socialist left in this country.

Therefore, we must recognize that many in the USA today who identify as "Nationalists" are not Socialists, but rather Constitutionalists. In other words, they are people who value liberty and want to protect the integrity of the U.S. Constitution. They see the freedoms established in the Constitution as being under attack and seek to protect the fundamental principles that established this nation as unique among nations. Thus, they identify as Nationalists; i.e., protecting the one nation ever established in

history upon the principles written in the Constitution.

So, don't get caught up in mere labels, but, instead, examine what people are actually doing and ask: Are their actions protecting freedoms or restricting them? This can be confusing when many groups employ the same labels, like racist groups using nationalist labels in their titles. This is why it is essential to look at function, not labels.

Throughout history, Satan, the enemy of freedom, has sought to destroy the image of God in humanity – destroy love, destroy goodness, destroy compassion, destroy intelligence; thus, his methods are beastly and always seek to control others and to bend humanity to his will through coercion. As we see these methods being employed, whether from the political right or left, we should resist them and, instead, promote the principles of truth, love, and freedom.

Some good-hearted Christians (as those who wrote the letter above) hear the President of the United States, Donald Trump's, rhetoric and don't see Jesus being modeled. They don't see godliness being practiced and, therefore, they get confused when they see other Christians supporting him. I think this confusion is due to forgetting a couple of key points.

First, they don't recognize the difference between a man of God (i.e., godly person – such as Job, Daniel, Moses, and the apostles) and ungodly people who are called by God for the fulfillment of His purposes (such as kings Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar).

Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD (Jeremiah 25:8, 9 NIV84).

Notice: ungodly, unconverted, worldly, prideful, and arrogant Nebuchadnezzar was called God's "servant" and was used by God to accomplish a purpose.

This first point helps me, as a Christian, to not be disturbed by Trump, because I recognize the difference between those who are God's representatives (godly people) and those who are not godly people, but are still being used by God to accomplish His purposes.

Second, I recognize the difference between the church and the state. While the Bible gives specific qualifications of mature character for church leaders, it gives no such qualifications for leaders of worldly governments.

With these two points in mind, I am able to differentiate the character qualities that would disqualify someone from being a pastor or church leader, yet realize those same qualities don't necessarily disqualify them from other professions – gardener, farmer, tailor, welder, pilot, surgeon, corporate lawyer, corporate leader, or politician. My point is that I don't hold politicians to the same standard I would hold a church leader, and I think many Christians get confused when they try to merge the church and state *in their thinking and decision-making*.

This happens on questions such as marriage; while it is clear from the Bible that God's design for marriage is one man and one woman, Christians forget that the state is not the church and isn't concerned with unity of hearts and minds as God designed, but about legal rights (property ownership,

next of kin rights, legal decision-making in health care, tax breaks, etc.). I am not troubled by a state legalizing same-sex marriage, because it's dealing only with human-law social contracts; human laws cannot make something sacred.

Regarding President Trump – as a psychiatrist, I have been conditioned to look past mere presentation to actual function; many people don't do this, but I have been trained to do so. I don't look at mere style, demeanor, or verbiage, but to action, function, or accomplishment.

Take the husband who beats his wife while yelling, "I only do this because I love you." I look past what he's saying to what he is doing. Likewise, when I examine Trump, I look past what and how he says things to what he is actually accomplishing as president – not as a husband or Christian, but as president.

What do I find? What he appears to be doing is protecting the liberties established in our Constitution.

Political Correctness and the Great Controversy

Ben Carson leapt onto the national stage when, at a presidential prayer breakfast, he described the problem with political correctness. He protested how the political correctness movement has slowly eroded our culture's sense of liberty and put many people under a constrained sense in which they feel they are no longer free to speak their mind, lest the "politically correct" get their feelings hurt and label them a bigot.

Donald Trump has weaponized the outrage at the encroachment of free speech. He didn't describe the problems with political correctness; instead, he behaved grossly politically incorrect and sometimes overtly offensive. By doing so, he *functionally* took back the space for freedom to speak openly and directly. I personally find much of what he says to be shocking, but I believe many times he speaks this way on purpose to stun and to get people to react. In other words, it is done strategically, not maliciously – one could say therapeutically – to get a specific outcome. The politically correct thought-police in society hate Trump for this and, therefore, aggressively oppose him. Their encroachment on our free speech is also seen in the "cancel culture" movement – to which many comedians are actively protesting. You can agree or disagree with Trump, but recognize that his actions push back such encroachments on our freedom of speech.

Further, I find that Trump is just out there, in your face, and is "genuine" – meaning he isn't smiling and saying one thing and then doing the opposite behind the scenes, like many other politicians. With Trump, you basically get what you see. And he presents as a flawed human being, but one who is open and real, which makes him someone with whom many people can identify – even if they don't agree with what or how he says things.

In the context of the great controversy between good and evil, I see Trump being like Nebuchadnezzar – not a godly man, but being used by God to give us a few more years of true liberty before the socialists completely erode our freedoms and bring about a one-world government. Many Christians who study Revelation believe that our freedoms will be eroded by the right – evangelicals merging with government to pass Christians laws. *The Southern Tidings* article suggests this route, and it is certainly possible; and I wisely keep an eye out for it. But I personally am also watching the left, with its social justice warriors and the green movement, who are seeking to unite the world in a coalition that will, for instance, manage carbon output purported to save the planet, but in reality is designed to become a

new ruling conglomerate that subjugates the nations (the pope has called a meeting of world leaders in May 2020 to discuss forming this new coalition – see my blog [*The Days of Noah & Today's Climate Change*](#)). Trump has interfered with this agenda and is being viciously attacked by social progressives who want to undermine our liberties and bring about a global coalition government, a one-world order.

This is why I support most of the *policies* of the Trump administration, even though I recognize that he is not presenting himself in a way that models after Jesus Christ, because I support liberty, equality, and want a government to restrain evil, not legislate righteousness.

But perhaps the real threat to our freedoms is the combined effect of both left and right. Rather than being the *United States*, in which a wide range of views, beliefs, values and perspectives exist simultaneously, standing upon the common respect for the principles of freedoms established in the Constitution, the country has regressed into an ever-increasing *divided* nation, in which two polar extremes view the other side as an existential threat to their rights, their freedoms, and even the very survival of the nation or planet, and thus seek to claim power to force its way. This is why the informed Christian must be disciplined to following God's principles of love, truth, and freedom and not any political party – and we must remember the difference between the church and the state.

Finally, with President Trump, we must remember to take him *seriously*, but not *literally*. The people who have problems with Trump tend to do the opposite – take him *literally*, but not *seriously*. This means we must recognize that Trump exaggerates and overstates things a lot for effect, but not to be taken literally – rather, to be taken seriously in the overall point he is trying to make or the process he is trying to accomplish. Those who don't recognize this often accuse Trump of lying, because he uses hyperbole to make a point. But overstatement and hyperbole are common methods of communication, a literary style, a vehicle to emphasize, to draw attention to, and to move people off complacency by inciting reaction and getting engagement. The Bible does this in many places. Trump is a genius at doing this – at saying things in such a way that it moves people to act and react. Whether you support him or not, Trump is an agent of change, a person shaking up the routine and getting people on both sides engaged.

Thus, I am not distressed by President Trump. Under his administration, I experience greater security of the constitutional protections and want to use this time to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ, realizing that one day (perhaps soon) either from the right or the left (but I suspect the left), our liberties will be encroached upon and our ability to share the gospel will be restricted. As long as our freedoms remain, however, I want people to come to a knowledge of God. So my suggestion is that we focus on function, accomplishment, and what is actually happening, not on mere rhetoric or style.