

# Forsaking Christian Principles – for Donald Trump

The Rev. Franklin Graham took his “Decision America” tour to Greenville, North Carolina recently and the Associated Press quoted a woman named Christina Jones who was there, a big fan of President Trump. She admires him, she said, because he is “supporting our Christian principles.”

Reading that, I wondered what Christian principles Ms. Jones thinks Donald Trump supports.

Was it the Christian principle about bragging, about telling everyone that you’re a genius? Or was it the Christian principle about belittling and humiliating your opponents, publicly? Maybe it was the Christian principle about vulgarity, or dishonesty, or cruelty, as when Mr. Trump pretended to shake uncontrollably at a political rally in order to mock a disabled journalist he didn’t like.

Or perhaps the Christian principle Ms. Jones had in mind was the one about paying hush money to a porn star to keep her quiet about a fling they had. Or was it the principle about suggesting that Carly Fiorina, one of his many primary opponents in 2016, wasn’t attractive enough to be president?

“Look at that face,” he said. “Would anyone vote for that? Was that the Christian principle Ms. Jones found so engaging in the president?”

And then there was the Rev. Graham himself, saying that, “One thing I appreciate about President Trump, he’s not a politician. And that’s why he gets in trouble all the time.” That’s one way to look at it, I guess. Another is that Donald Trump gets into trouble all the time because, at his core, he’s not a good person; that he’s not smart or stable; that he’s impulsive and mean-spirited. You’d think that might be

something a perceptive man of the cloth like the Rev. Franklin Graham would have noticed.

(That's not to say liberals, in and out of the media, aren't out to get the president. They are.)

There's no escaping the fact that white evangelicals are among the president's biggest fans. His approval among them is 25 points higher than the national average.

Christina Jones, the evangelical at the Greenville rally also said, "I do feel like we are, as Christians, the first line of defense for the president" and that "everybody's against him."

Since I am not a member of the faith, let me give this space over to a man who is. Peter Wehner is a conservative who served in three Republican administrations and often writes about politics, Donald Trump, and his Christian faith.

A few months ago he had this to say in the Atlantic:

"The enthusiastic, uncritical embrace of President Trump by white evangelicals is among the most mind-blowing developments of the Trump era. How can a group that for decades – and especially during the Bill Clinton presidency – insisted that character counts and that personal integrity is an essential component of presidential leadership not only turn a blind eye to the ethical and moral transgressions of Donald Trump, but also constantly defend him? Why are those who have been on the vanguard of 'family values' so eager to give a man with a sordid personal and sexual history a [mulligan](#)?

Part of the answer is their belief that they are engaged in an existential struggle against a wicked enemy—not Russia, not North Korea, not Iran, but rather American liberals and the left...

Many white evangelical Christians, then, are deeply fearful

of what a Trump loss would mean for America, American culture, and American Christianity. If a Democrat is elected president, they believe, it might all come crashing down around us.”

Before we cast stones and accuse those evangelicals of hypocrisy (even though it sure looks like that’s just what they’re guilty of ), let’s be charitable and keep an open mind on why they have forsaken their cherished principles – for a man like Donald Trump, no less. What, for example, would our country look like if a progressive Democrat were to take over? Evangelicals have contemplated that America, and it scares the hell out of them.

On abortion, an issue of immense importance to evangelicals, all the Democrats running for president are not only for “a woman’s right to choose,” but they seem to favor abortion with absolutely no restrictions.

Can we really blame evangelical Christians for wanting a street fighter like Donald Trump to stand in the way of that – even if he’s doing it only as a matter of political expediency?

And there’s a belief among white evangelical Christians that too many on the left see them as hayseeds and hicks, backwater types who aren’t too bright. Isn’t their reputation worth defending? And if Donald Trump is the man they think is in their corner, isn’t that worth their allegiance to him?

“Many evangelical Christians are also filled with grievances and resentments because they feel they have been mocked, scorned, and dishonored by the elite culture over the years,” Wehner writes. “For them, Trump is a man who will not only push their agenda on issues such as the courts and abortion; he will be ruthless against those they view as threats to all they know and love.”

What many Americans see as Mr. Trump’s character flaws – his

need to lash out at anyone he perceives to be an enemy, for example – evangelical Christians see as a quality to admire. Someone has to fight those godless cultural elites, they figure. Why not someone as merciless as those progressives?

At the moment, Mr. Trump is in the midst of a congressional inquiry that may very well lead to his impeachment. Republicans in general will stick with him – out of party loyalty, for some ... out of fear of reprisals from the Trump base, for others.

But evangelical Christians will stick with him, not because they fear him, but because they love him, because he is their political savior – the only real bulwark, they believe, standing between them and the likes of a President Elizabeth Warren.

Forsaking one's principles isn't easy, especially when they involve religious values. But sometimes, I guess, it's not all that difficult either.