

# If You Don't Like Obama

by Dan Adler

We live in interesting times, to say the least. Our nation has probably never been more divided across ideological and political lines since the Civil War. Changes are happening and they're happening fast. Some people are thrilled about that and others are dismayed by it. As Christians, who happen to be citizens of the United States, we are caught up in the midst of all this and clearly, almost everyone has a strong opinion one way or the other. And with the internet at our fingertips, there is plenty of opportunity to spread those thoughts and opinions widely and quickly. Therefore, most of us receive plenty of politically loaded emails, blogs and news posts on a regular basis. I know I do. And that's what inspired me to write this article.

I'm not going to talk about my political opinions, but rather I'd like to talk about how our Christianity fleshes out in the midst of a politically tense environment. I think that sometimes it's hard for us to sort out the truth that we are called first to be Christians before we choose our political affiliations or values. That doesn't mean we can't be involved in politics and have strong opinions about what's best, but our Christian values must dictate our actions most of all. And when I say that, for the sake of this article, I'm not referring to the big "moral issues" such as "Social Justice", "Gay Marriage", "Abortion law", "Affirmative Action", etc. (not to minimize those issues). No, I'm talking about how we conduct ourselves as Christians toward others we disagree with while we hold our political opinions and maybe even are activists for them.

The other day, on my Facebook wall, I saw a fellow Christian, who happened to be African American, post a link to an article about a popular Republican conservative blog that was filled with racist remarks about the Obama children. The caption she put above it said, "Somebody please help me understand!" I found the article and the multitude of hateful, racist statements made to be really disturbing too and I'm sure this sister in Christ was wondering how people holding a conservative viewpoint could speak such hateful and racist things. Especially since she knows a lot of Christians are also conservatives. Good question. How could they? And I have to say, I've also been disturbed by the flavor of a few emails I've received from the conservative side of things that have had racist leanings – small remarks, cartoons, jokes and innuendo – that were seeking to push the political point harder by piggy-backing on racist slurs. My fear is that among many conservatives, in reaction to President Obama's liberal political positions and aggressive actions, there will be a misdirected resurgence of racism that rises in response to him and his ethnicity instead of just to his policies and politics that they happen to strongly disagree with. I fear that that is already happening and that because of strongly opposing political positions, race relations; even amongst Christians could become worse after this Presidency than before because of the unfair association of political stance with racial identity. If you're a conservative, it's okay to strongly disagree with President Obama's policies, but it's about his policies, not because he's black! And if you are a Christian who happens to be conservative, you will be a pawn of satan if you allow yourself to be caught up in that kind of response. If you see yourself as a conservative or Republican, check yourself. If you don't like Obama, have you allowed racist attitudes to creep into your thinking?

But this isn't just a concern for conservatives. I've found it incredibly ironic how, in the name of "tolerance" and even "justice", so much hateful attitude, action and speech is directed by

many liberals toward those who disagree with them. In that context, I find what seem to be routinely violent, anti-war protests to be the epitome of irony. I remember in the 2004 Presidential elections how, at some local Christian colleges, students with any kind of Republican bumper sticker on their cars were getting their tires slashed. From the left, the conservatives are hatefully presented as the rich, racist, oil-loving, environment trashing, less intelligent, homosexual hating, pro-war, big business loving, religious bigots and hypocrites. The implication of that packaging by liberals of conservatives would therefore be that those who are liberal embody the opposite of such horrible evils. They would be the loving, humble, tolerant, more intelligent, morally consistent, peaceful, mostly lower class people. But the amount of money, the pride, the hateful speech, the virulent intolerance for those who disagree, the violence, the equal moral inconsistencies and hostility toward religious people and conservatives (and especially conservative religious people) from many on the left makes it pretty clear that much of that is not true. If you consider yourself a liberal Christian, remember the Christian part and be sure that your concerns about conservative politics don't lower you to un-Christian attitudes and behavior.

In this political firestorm, another un-Christian dynamic has arisen from both conservatives and liberals which is called misogyny (the hatred of women). How many times has Hilary Clinton been personally trashed, mocked, insulted and verbally degraded as a woman in a very personal way by conservatives and Republicans who don't like her politics or her husband's? But now even more, when has a woman ever had her clothes, her marriage, her intelligence, her education, her children and her family assaulted, insulted and berated as has Sarah Palin and the way she's been treated by liberals and Democrats? Have we ever seen male politicians attacked in these same type of personal ways? I don't think so. Not liking the political stance of one or the other of these women is your prerogative. But it's not because they happen to be women! You may strongly oppose their politics, character or qualification, but opposition to them takes on an evil form when it becomes misogynistic and hateful to them as women. And this is not a Christian way of thinking or behaving.

Sadly, what you clearly see from both conservatives and liberals, Democrats and Republicans, Christian and non-Christian, is a strong sense of self-righteousness that each side proudly embraces. Take a few minutes and listen to Rush Limbaugh on the conservative side and Bill Maher on the liberal side. These are two men with huge egos who have huge followings. Coming from both of them, there is an equal disdain for other political and ideological positions and an equal sense of almost religious pride (which is ironic for Maher – since he's an atheist) and condescension toward those with opposing beliefs. And those who listen to them can easily pick up this attitude and approach without extricating it from the issue itself.

This is the ugly muck of political discourse that we all find ourselves immersed in. There are important issues at stake in our country. I'm not trying to minimize those realities. Our natural tendency is to align ourselves with the media spokespersons for our side of the issues. But we have to realize that most of these people aren't Christians and that if they are, they often aren't presenting their cases in a Christian way. So as we listen and read and seek to sort through these issues, we've got to be cautious and not embrace any attitudes or values that aren't reflective of the mind of Christ – even if we agree with a particular political position being presented. As Christians, we've got to rise above these things – no matter where you stand on the political issues. Self-righteousness, hate, racism,

misogyny, and lack of love are not Christian behaviors or values. Vilifying and marginalizing individuals or sub-groups of people, has been the very dynamic historically that has allowed a Nazi Germany to arise and a Communist Russia and China to arise. We cannot be like the Communists of the past, who in the self-righteous name of “social justice” and “equity”, began by first vilifying, marginalizing and then slaughtering millions of political opponents in order to establish what they thought would be a more just political system. They were so caught up in their political values, that they were blinded to the hideous moral atrocities that they were committing - while ironically trying to attain their more just, utopian society. We also cannot lower ourselves to the sin of embracing racist attitudes, thoughts or actions - even if we strongly oppose the liberal political ideology and decisions of a President who happens to be Black. We need to stand up to those who endorse racist attitudes, passively or actively, even if we agree with most of their other values and political stances. We are Christians! We are aliens in this world. We belong to another Kingdom that transcends all earthly Kingdoms and we must conduct our behavior in submission to and in the steps of our King – Jesus Christ! He said such radical things as “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Turn the other cheek. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...” I know there are some notable arguments of how these statements don’t necessarily apply to nations dealing with conflict and don’t imply national passivism. But at least we know for certain, that they do apply to how we deal with individuals who may even be our political and/or ideological enemies.

So my challenge to you, as you discuss and sort through the issues in the tempestuous political climate we are in, is to always put your values, statements and attitudes under the spotlight of the Word of God to see if you are truly thinking with the mind of Jesus before you are following the party lines of Democrat and Republican or conservative, moderate and liberal so that you won’t find yourself unwittingly embracing un-Christian attitudes and behaviors. And most of all, pray! We need to humble ourselves and pray. Pray for our nation. Pray for fellow Christians. Pray for race relations. Pray for God’s intervention in our nation and world. Pray for our political leaders – whether you agree with them and like them or not. Pray for revival amongst believers. Pray for Biblical unity amongst us – racially and denominationally. And let’s truly be a light to the world – demonstrating that we are true followers of Christ who aren’t racist, misogynist, hateful or self-righteous – but a people who are known for their humble love for one another. Like an old Petra song says, “We are pilgrims. We are aliens. We are not of this world.” Let’s live that way.