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Chancellor's View : Don't Play Dead

February 01, 2009 | Jerry Falwell, Jr.

The student body at Liberty University applauded after the presidential election last November when I admonished them to pray for Barack Obama. Even though the vast majority had supported John McCain, they understand that as Christians, we have a responsibility to pray for the president-elect and not only to support him when he makes good decisions but also to lawfully oppose him when he promotes anti-Christian policies.

I am proud that the students embrace this concept. But other Christians seem to be waving a flag of surrender. One leading conservative columnist argued in an op-ed piece titled “Religious Right R.I.P.” that Christians should retreat to their churches and stay there because they will never obtain real political power, and lawmakers cannot legislate morality. The columnist was even so bold as to claim that when those on the left gain political power, they do not attempt to impose their values on us!

I could not believe what I was reading. Since when has it been the goal of conservative Christians to obtain political power or legislate morality? Are we legislating morality when we, as citizens, fight for laws to protect marriage and life? I believe that liberals in mainline denominations smile when they see conservative Christians falling for the lies that have been propagated about the religious right since it first emerged in 1979.

When my father began organizing the religious right as a movement, leaders were reluctant to become involved in social reform. They were not seeking political power. They had spent their entire time in ministry avoiding politics, but when the culture became hostile to Christian values, they mobilized to keep the left from imposing its values on them and their children.

This isn't the first time conservative Christians have been dismissed as dearly departed. Yet we continue to resurface as a political force because God is still at work in the hearts of His people.

Besides, I don't believe it was conservative ideals that were defeated in November. I agree with Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), who noted in a column for the D.C. Examiner that "Americans haven't changed, Republicans have." DeMint added, "When Ronald Reagan ran unashamed on conservative principles in 1980 and Republicans in Congress embraced bold conservative reforms in 1994, America responded with overwhelming approval."

I believe the nation will do so again.

Conservative people of faith who were at the fore of the elections in 1980, 1994 and even 2004 are still around, and they remain equipped for battle. But there have not been enough people on Capitol Hill for us to rally around in recent years. We are hungry for a Ronald Reagan to lead us.

We need in the White House a protector of our historic religious freedoms, an advocate for the unborn, a defender of the traditional American family and a guardian of constitutional principles of law. Some may say that these are old-fashioned ideals that no longer resonate with Americans, particularly young people.

However, such critics need look only as far as Liberty University to see that throngs of young people still live by the ideals Christians have long held dear. Liberty is rebuilding the conservative movement by training these future conservative leaders.

Reagan once stated: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

These words should incite Christians to action. I understand that we cannot achieve spiritual triumph through government and that we should not attempt to create a church culture on Capitol Hill. But we must ensure that our government does not make us unwelcome in our own country.

Conservative Christians were largely responsible for Reagan's winning the presidency and changing the course of our nation three decades ago. We must change the political climate again, no matter how many critics are ready to erect our tombstones.

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