

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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A Matter of Grace

Where to begin?

A great deal of criticism has been, and is being leveled against President Donald Trump by the Main Stream Media along with various detractors across the political spectrum. Some of what is charged against Trump is deserved, either because he is combative by nature, or he enjoys tweaking his opponents. Much of what is said about the President is hateful, and intended to diminish the man and his presidency.

As I have written in previous articles for my column, Donald Trump was not my first choice as the Republican candidate for the presidential nomination. In fact, of the seventeen Republicans running, Trump was number seventeen for me. As the various candidates dropped out, it became clear that Trump was possibly going to win the Republican nomination. Any of the seventeen would be far superior to a Hillary Clinton presidency.

The things I disliked about Trump from the outset had to do with his overall manner. His attack on Senator John McCain, where he said he was not a hero, was over the top. As a thirty-four-year veteran of our military, I did not appreciate this vendetta against McCain. From a political perspective, Senator McCain and I have little in common. But he did not deserve to be publicly shamed and berated by Mr. Trump at the outset of the campaign.

Furthermore, I did not like Mr. Trump's bullying tactics toward the other Republican presidential hopefuls. He is frequently rude and boorish. He has involved himself in activities that make me cringe. But as I have written before: I was not voting for a Sunday School teacher.

In Mr. Trump, I believe those who voted for him were a lot like me. That is, they didn't always like what they saw in him, but they were fed up with the empty promises of neatly groomed politicians who say the right things to get elected, but fail to deliver once in office. Mr. Trump is a hard-nosed businessman. He's a wheeler-dealer. For many of us who supported him for the presidency, we liked this man who knows how to get things done. He has made many campaign promises, such as "draining the swamp" in Washington D.C. Building the wall along the Mexican border. Restoring America as the economic engine of the world. Building up our military as the premier fighting force on the planet. And so forth.

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Some have challenged me for supporting President Trump. How can I as a Christian, they ask, support someone who has been married three times? How can I support a man who has owned and operated casinos?

Here's my answer.

I support President Trump (just as I have supported every president during my 69 years on planet earth, even those I was diametrically opposed to politically and philosophically) because I believe he loves America, and wants to restore our nation by protecting our freedoms and liberty.

Here is where I believe some of us in the Christian community make a mistake. I did not grow up in the church, so I was not exposed to solid Christian teaching. I had a life-changing encounter with Jesus when I was a twenty-four-year-old sergeant in the Marine Corps. I had much to learn about this Savior who loves me.

My life-style up to that point was far from exemplary. The night I walked into that Christian Serviceman's Center, changing my life forever, I had been living with a hooker (prostitute) for the previous six months. My mouth was a cesspool of vulgarity. I was in the bars almost daily drinking with my friends. The path of life I was on scared me, but I knew of no way to change. Jesus intercepted me and changed all of that, for which I am forever grateful.

In becoming a Christian, I was accepted into churches and fellowship wherever I traveled around the world. No one has ever held it against me that I did not always live a clean, Christian life. I was able to attend seminary. I have enjoyed being the pastor of several churches. And I had a wonderful career as a Navy chaplain for twenty-five years. I have been truly blessed.

So then, why is it that there are Christians who cannot bring themselves to support our president because he has not acted like a Christian throughout his life? To my knowledge, he has never professed to have had a life-changing encounter with Jesus. Why then do we hold him to Christian standards? This seems highly unfair. If the person doesn't even know the rules, how can you expect them to live according to those rules?

Here's the most important thing in all of this. Every last person on this planet is a sinner. Nothing complicated in this. We have all violated God's laws at one time or another. So, we're already toast, condemned. But God loved us enough to pay the price for our sin. Jesus is that payment. In accepting Christ as Lord and Savior we are forgiven. This is known as Grace. Jesus extends grace to us.

I'm no longer judged by God for my life of sin. I'm forgiven! So, let's not expect a person who is not a Christian to live like one, whether it's your neighbor across the street, or the President of the United States. It's all about grace.