Can’t Logout of Christianity When You Login to Facebook

My name is Mike Osburn and I have been a member of The Springs for about 25 years. I have been involved in government and politics for a little longer than that but I have only been an elected official for four years. I have learned a lot in that relatively short time and I am humbled by the responsibility and the sheer volume of things public servants must consider.

One of the tough lessons that I have learned is that there seems to be a common expectation that because elected officials “signed up” for their position, they also willingly signed up to receive hateful, demeaning or disparaging attacks. And all too often, I have found that these comments come from believers and non-believers alike.

Just before the 2020 legislative session started in February, I was asked to participate in a continuing education webinar for a national association. My topic to discuss was effective advocacy. During the question and answer period, the #1 reaction was shock at my assertion that calling out a policymaker on social media was not the most effective avenue to success and was likely even damaging to the cause. Frankly, I was shocked that that was shocking.

That example drives home an important point … that in this time of hourly, sometimes inappropriate and often harsh social media messages originating anywhere from high-level government officials to the local busy-body, we can’t forget who we are … and WHO’S we are. We can’t logout of our faith when we login to social media.

For example, recently like a lot of you, I have watched most of the Governor’s news briefings on Facebook. It is amazing how many of the comments are scathing, often profanity-riddled personal rebukes of his decisions or his presentation or even his appearance. And many are so over-the-top, I can’t imagine anyone ever saying them to another person’s face.

Paul publicly dealt with politicians, most notably Caesar, but he never called anyone an “idiot” or acted in a non Christ-like manner. He frequently dealt with politicians of highly questionable character (look up King Agrippa) but he interacted with him in a way that brought glory to God and ultimately spread the gospel to the world. Their example is clear. Not once did Paul engage in “quill-pen courage” (as opposed to “keyboard courage” … see what I did there?) to disparage leaders of the day.

Government is like any other industry. The vast majority of the people are there to do the right thing. On the other hand, there are certainly also a few who are there for themselves. But at the end of the day, our government is made up of people. Behind the social media account is a person. And just because we type comments instead of say them, we must remember who we represent.

I believe that Christ expects us to take advantage of our rights and the responsibilities that come with those rights. I ran for office to use these rights to make positive changes in our world. I hope I succeed at that more often than I fail. I’m certainly not perfect. But speaking as someone who hears his fair share of political discourse, I’d like to remind us all that we are called to build up rather than tear down and to let the light of Jesus Christ shine though words and deeds. Problems are not solved if we logout of our faith only to tear down someone. When that happens, nothing changes except the strength of our witness.