

# Dallas pastor says God gives Trump authority to ‘take out’ Korean leader

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—God has given President Donald Trump the “authority to take out Kim Jong-Un,” according to Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas and one of the president’s key evangelical Christian advisers.

Jeffress’ statement Aug. 8 followed the president’s warning earlier in the day that North Korea would “be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen” if the North Korean leader continues to threaten the United States.

Jeffress has been an outspoken Trump supporter since early in the presidential campaign. He is one of dozens of conservative evangelical leaders who have been getting what one of them described as “unprecedented access” to this president who, they say, seeks their views on policy.

## **Tensions escalate between U.S. and North Korea**

Jeffress released his statement as tensions between the two nuclear powers escalated, and as Democrats and some Republicans criticized Trump’s remarks as reckless.

For the first time last month, North Korea successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach California, according to the *New York Times*. And the *Washington Post* reported North Korea may have miniaturized a warhead that could fit inside such a missile.

In a written statement released early Tuesday evening, Aug. 8, Jeffress said he believed the Bible makes clear that “God has endowed rulers full power to use whatever means necessary—including war—to stop evil.”

Jeffress praised Trump for not tolerating North Korea’s threats and panned his predecessor’s handling of world affairs, saying former President Barack Obama had made “empty threats” and drawn “imaginary red lines” in dealing with Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.

“I’m heartened to see that our president will not tolerate any threat against the American people. When President Trump draws a red line, he will not erase it, move it or back away from it,” Jeffress said.

“Thank God for a president who is serious about protecting our country.”

### **Romans 13 gives government ‘authority to do whatever,’ Jeffress asserts**

In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Jeffress cited the biblical verse Romans 13, saying it “gives the government to the authority to do whatever, whether it’s assassination, capital punishment or evil punishment to quell the actions of evildoers like Kim Jong Un.”

Jeffress was a member of Trump’s evangelical advisory committee during the 2016 presidential election and since has attended several meetings of prominent evangelicals at the White House. That includes a dinner ahead of the National Day of Prayer, at which he assured, “Mr. President, we’re going to be your most loyal friends.”

Jeffress also recently hosted a Fourth of July concert at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., where the president pledged his support to the military and to people of faith. First Baptist’s choir and orchestra premiered a musical arrangement of Trump’s campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again.”

Trump, who was raised as a Presbyterian, has gone out of his way to embrace evangelicals. White evangelicals gave him 81 percent of their votes in November, a higher percentage than any other religious group.