

Another Major Victory for Religious Freedom in America

On Jan. 9, 2015, I wrote an article titled, "The Mayor of Atlanta Declares War on Religious Freedom." Now, more than three and a half years later, sanity has prevailed and religious freedoms have been preserved. Atlanta must pay up.

The case involved Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran, a man who had served the city of Atlanta for more than 30 years, working with distinction and without blemish. But when he self-published a 160-page book for use in his home church, gay activists rose up against him, demanding that he be fired.

What was his crime?

On his own time and on his own dime, he dared to write a book which contained a few lines—yes, just a few lines—speaking against homosexual practice. (And note that he spoke against other sexual sins as well, based on Scripture.)

According to Cochran, he did this with proper clearance from his authorities, even giving a copy to the mayor, who, Cochran claims, promised to read it.

But at the behest of LGBT activists, Cochran was first suspended for 30 days without pay (seriously!), ordered to go to sensitivity training, then fired.

To add insult to the injury and madness to the circus, Mayor Kasim Reed then explained that Cochran was fired because, "We will not discriminate on the basis of race or gender or religion or creed or sexual orientation or physical ability or gender identity."

This is a line to make George Orwell proud: "Because we will not discriminate based on religion, we are firing you because

of your religious beliefs.”

Thankfully, sanity has prevailed and religious liberty has been preserved. As the Daily Wire reported, “Atlanta To Pay Out \$1.2 Million To Christian Fire Chief After Violating His First Amendment Rights.”

The initial ruling in Cochran’s favor came back in December 2017. Now, the city council “agreed to pay out \$1.2 million to the former chief for damages and attorneys’ fees.” (Cochran was represented by the ADF, which has been on the front lines of major religious freedoms victories in recent years.)

In the words of ADF attorney Kevin Theriot, “The government can’t force its employees to get its permission before they engage in free speech. It also can’t fire them for exercising that First Amendment freedom, causing them to lose both their freedom and their livelihoods.”

Precisely so.

The outrage is that this happened in the first place. The outrage is that anyone thought they had the power or right to terminate Cochran for his biblically-based, religious beliefs. And remember: At no point was there a single charge of discrimination brought against him. In other words, he treated all his employees and colleagues in a proper and professional manner.

The issue was what he believed about homosexual practice. And the city of Atlanta had the gall to tell him, “If you hold to these beliefs and express these beliefs, you cannot work for us.”

To repeat: That is a Constitutional outrage.

But around the world, similar outrages are occurring.

Most recently, the prime minister of Australia, Scott Morrison, announced that new legislation would “make it clear

that no student of a non-state school should be expelled on the basis of their sexuality.”

In other words, a Christian school (or, any religious school) in Australia cannot require its students to live by its moral and religious code.

This is beyond chilling, as once again, gay rights trump religious rights.

Thankfully, in America, there continues to be a pushback against the all-out attack on our First Amendment rights. Rights which are foundational to the well-being of our nation. Rights which have formed the very warp and woof of our country since our inception.

To lose those rights is to lose our freedoms. To lose those rights is to forfeit our liberty and descend into ever-increasing captivity and bondage.

But all is not lost, and Kelvin Cochran’s victory is a victory for us all.

And, the truth be told, his victory is not an attack on those who identify as LGBT. He should not have been fired in the first place, and the Bible says what it says. People can accept that or reject that by their own choice. Those are the freedoms we enjoy.

Back in 2003, I noted in one of my sermons that “The heightened moral crisis in society, led especially by the homosexual agenda, ... will produce a holy backlash.”

It’s taken a while, but as LGBT activists continue to overplay their hand, that holy backlash has increased as well. May it abound and grow until sanity and freedom prevail across the land.