

Seattle Pastor's Fate Decided Following Arrest for Public Preaching

A new consent order has vindicated a Seattle pastor who was previously arrested for preaching.

Pastor Matthew Meinecke was arrested twice in 2022 after his Bible reading "triggered hostile reactions from activists," First Liberty Institute explained.

Antifa activists took the pastor's Bible, ripped out its pages, pushed him down, and took one of his shoes. When Meinecke refused to leave upon the police's request, he was arrested.

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Two days after this event, a similar incident occurred during Seattle's PrideFest. Meinecke was again arrested after he refused to leave.

The legal group described the consent order as a "complete victory for the pastor."

The judge, Barbara J. Rothstein, granted Meinecke "permanent injunctive relief from the unconstitutional police policy, compensatory damages for the wrongful arrests, and nominal damages for the constitutional violations, along with reasonable attorney fees and expenses," First Liberty Institute noted.

Nate Kellum, senior counsel for the legal organization, said in a statement that the order is "only fitting."

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“The government should never silence the speech of a citizen just because an audience dislikes what it’s hearing,” Kellum said. “Pastor Meinecke is thrilled to put this case behind him and get back to sharing the gospel on the streets of Seattle.”



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In April, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit concluded that restrictions on the pastor’s speech were “content-based heckler’s vetoes, where officers curbed his speech once the audience’s hostile reaction manifested.” As a result of the restrictions, Meineke “established irreparable harm because a loss of First Amendment freedoms constitutes an irreparable injury, and the balance of equities and public interest favors Meinecke.”

The consent order from Sept. 10 mirrored the April decision, First Liberty noted.

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