

California Church Hit with Massive \$1.2 Million Fine

Calvary Christian Fellowship, the San Jose church that has been fighting multiple lawsuits against the Santa Clara County legal system, was just hit with a \$1.2 million fine for breaking mask protocols.

Superior Court Judge Evette D. Pennypacker ruled that the church flagrantly broke the county's mask mandates from November 2020 to June 2021.

Things have been so contentious between Calvary and county officials that accusations of spying on the church have made the news cycle in March 2023.

As reported by Charisma News, "Substack investigative journalist David Zweig obtained court documents that revealed enforcement officers with Santa Clara County began spying on the congregation at Calvary Chapel San Jose and reported details about the church's worship, prayer and other church meetings."

While Calvary claimed the government's orders violated their religious freedoms, the judge disagreed and said the mask mandate was "neutral and generally applicable" to other similar institutions in the county.

"It should appear clear to all—regardless of religious affiliation—that wearing a mask while worshipping one's god and communing with other congregants is a simple, unobtrusive, giving way to protect others while still exercising your right to religious freedom," Pennypacker wrote.

With mask mandates being a highly contentious subject in the United States, and the world, the judge's opinion rings shockingly partisan and personally influenced for such a

ruling.

California is in fact in the minority when it comes to the strictness of its masking regulations, as there are still places, such as Oakland, where “people age 6 and older to wear masks in city-owned facilities, including libraries, senior centers and recreation centers, through at least July 1. Health care workers in Los Angeles County are required to mask up during patient care or when they are in patient care areas,” according to the AARP.

It appears to not be as clear as Judge Pennypacker thinks.

Pennypacker continued in her ruling writing, “Unfortunately, Defendants repeatedly refused to model, much less, enforce this gesture. Instead, they repeatedly flouted their refusal to comply with the Public Health Orders and urged others to do so ‘who cares what the cost,’ including death.”

As reported by Fox News, “Calvary was one of several large California evangelical churches that flouted state and local mask-wearing and social distancing rules designed to prevent the spread of COVID during its deadliest period.”

Attorney Mariah Gondeiro, who is representing Calvary Chapel and is with Advocates for Faith and Freedom, argues the constitutionality of the mask mandates as they were not applied equally in the state and county.

“They exempted essential government entities, as well as personal care [businesses] like hair and nail salons, and entertainment studios. There was no singing ban on entertainment studios, so they could continue their productions,” she told The Free Press last month.

“This is not just our 1st Amendment rights, it’s really our biblical mandate not to forsake assembling with the saints,” Pastor Ché Ahn, senior pastor of Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, said during his church’s battle with the California

legal system in 2021.

This is not the first time that Pastor Mike McClure and his church have been the target of the California court system.

The AP reports that “The church and its pastors were previously held in contempt of court and fined for violating limits on indoor public gatherings. But a state appellate court reversed those decisions last year, saying that the restrictions on indoor worship services were stricter than for secular activities such as going to grocery stores.”

As the world continues recovering not only from the pandemic but the government overreach that resulted in massively restricted freedoms for the entire world, there are radical government entities still targeting Christians and their houses of worship to this day.

Satan is relentless, and he will stop at nothing to intimidate Christians from worshipping God.

This stripping of freedom is not overt though, it is often disguised to help keep people safe from an outside threat even when the restrictions turn out to be more harmful than the threat they are established to prevent.

Even as churches like Calvary and workers like Colorado’s Jack Phillips are continuously harassed by secular government entities for the practice of their faith in Jesus Christ, there is strength, renewal and wisdom for them during these battles in the Word of God.

Lift up all Christians around the world who are being persecuted today for their faith, and pray that the Lord give them the strength and provision to endure and persevere in the face of these attacks. {eoa}

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