

'Jesus Not Allowed': Anti-Faith Sentiment Sweeps US

Could you imagine going to jail for your faith? A recent report warns that it could happen.

CBN News investigated the growing wave of hostility to Christianity in America that's led to hundreds of court cases.

No Religion Allowed

Angela Hildenbrand faced the very real possibility of going to jail for her faith. The trouble began when a federal judge ruled that no one at her Texas high school could pray or even use words like *prayer* or *amen* during the 2011 graduation ceremonies.

As class valedictorian, Hildenbrand felt God deserved the praise, even if it meant jail for her.

"I was definitely preparing myself to have to make that sort of tough decision and mentally prepare myself for what well could be coming next," she told CBN News.

Hildenbrand's case is just one of more than 640 cases of religious hostility cited in a new report by the Liberty Institute. General Counsel Jeff Mateer, who takes on many of these cases, helped put the survey together.

"The atheists and the secularists are well-organized and they're well-funded," the Liberty Institute attorney told CBN News.

"The rate of hostility to people of faith is overwhelming," he said. "It's increasing. Every day, we're getting calls."

One call involved the Veterans Administration demanding to preview Scott Rainey's prayer for a Memorial Day ceremony at Houston National Cemetery.

They told Rainey, who pastors the Living Word Church of the Nazarene in Houston, he couldn't pray "in Jesus' name."

"I have never said a prayer in my life where I didn't end it saying 'in the name of Jesus Christ I pray, amen,'" Pastor Rainey said.

Contending for the Faith

Mateer is also working to save this veteran's memorial cross in San Diego, one of several cases that could have serious national consequences if courts order their removal.

"Are we going to bulldoze all those crosses?" Mateer asked. "We're going to sandblast God from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?"

But Mateer says the good news is, when believers fight back, they usually win.

"You need to stand up and fight," he said. "And that's exactly what Angela did."

Just one day before Hildenbrand's graduation, an appeals court ruled she could pray and say whatever she wanted.

"I thank You for Your great love for us and for our great nation, where we are free," she prayed at her graduation. "And it's in Jesus' name I pray, amen."

Courts eventually ruled that Pastor Rainey—and all veterans at burials—are allowed to freely express their faith.

But there is an across-the-board assault of religious hostility, and Americans' religious liberty hangs in the balance.