

Valedictorian Defies School Ban, Declares Faith in Jesus During Speech

A North Carolina valedictorian boldly took the stage during his high school graduation and told attendees all about his faith after his school district had attempted to censor his remarks about God and Jesus Christ.

Liberty Counsel, a non-profit legal, group released a redacted letter they sent to a high school student who was seeking legal advice after he submitted his speech to the school district.

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According to his attorneys, the valedictorian speech addressed the adversity he has faced in his life due to several medical conditions and how Jesus helped him to overcome those challenges.

In part of his speech, the valedictorian said, "I want to thank my Lord Jesus Christ for getting me through because if it weren't for Him, I don't know how I would've gotten through life...Jesus Christ has always loved me."

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The speech also gave appropriate credit to his parents, and teachers, as well as challenged his classmates to be a good influence in the lives of other people.

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The speech was submitted to a school administrator who struck through several instances where the name of God was mentioned, deleted the phrase, "I want to thank my Lord Jesus Christ for getting me through, because if it weren't for Him," and removed "Jesus Christ."

School staff had contended the reason the district originally censored his speech was because of the "separation of church and state."

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However, Liberty Counsel wrote in its advice letter, that legal precedents show that personal religious expression is not a "First Amendment orphan," and religious speech from graduating high school seniors is just as protected as their secular speech.

"Recent Supreme Court cases have conclusively held that the Establishment Clause does not permit censorship of private religious speech. Such attempts are improper and violate the First Amendment. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that private speech is protected; it is only government speech endorsing religion that is prohibited by the Establishment Clause," Liberty Counsel explained.

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