

Why Did YouTube Yank Pastor's ISIS Message?

The pastor of a small-town Baptist church in Georgia says he got banned from YouTube after he posted a video of a Sunday sermon he gave about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East.

"Apparently, they didn't like me preaching on radical Islam, so I got booted and banned," said Daniel Ausbun, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Moreland, Georgia. "This is sermon censorship."

On Aug. 24, Ausbun delivered a sermon about the Islamic State, terrorism, radical Islam and Christian persecution in the Middle East.

"So many people in the church had been asking about it," the pastor told me. "This was almost more of an educational sermon."

Based on a copy of his sermon notes, the pastor based his message on several New Testament verses—including Matt. 24:9. That verse reads: "Then they will hand you over for persecution, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of My name."

Ausbun told his congregation that Middle Eastern Christians were given a choice to convert to Islam, pay a tax, leave immediately or face death. He also warned that ISIS is recruiting Westerners. He encouraged the church to pray for the gospel message to advance despite terrorism and war.

About 3 1/2 years ago, Ausbun started a YouTube channel for church members who missed the Sunday service. Over the years, he posted dozens of sermon videos without a single problem—until last Wednesday.

"I received an email from YouTube telling me that my account had been terminated for violation of the terms of service and their community guidelines," he said. "They actually terminated my entire account."

Ausbun said he decided to read YouTube's community guidelines, and that's when he put two and two together. They thought his sermon amounted to hate speech.

YouTube clearly states that it doesn't permit "hate speech"—and that includes "speech which attacks or demeans a group based on race or ethnic origin, religion" and so on and so forth.

"They didn't tell me exactly why they terminated my account, but by default there was nothing else wrong," Ausbun said. "It had to be hate speech."

For the past week he's been trying to reach someone at YouTube to explain what happened. So far, his calls have gone unreturned. I sent them a message, too. So far, no response.

"They didn't like what I preached on," Ausbun said. "I shared about radical Islam from a Christian perspective, and they consider that to be hate speech."

I wish I could direct you to a link of the pastor's message but YouTube deleted it. So, I can't tell you verbatim what the pastor said. However, according to his sermon notes, there was nothing hateful about what he preached.

Ausbun concedes that YouTube can censor whatever videos it wishes. But he does wonder: What else is it banning?

YouTube came under a firestorm of criticism after ISIS was allowed to post a video showing the beheading of American journalist James Foley.

"What the hell is the matter with YouTube?" Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly said on *America's Newsroom*. "Posting that. The

beheading. What the hell is the matter with YouTube? Nobody should post that.”

YouTube removed the video and explained its policy in a statement to the website Mediaite.

“YouTube has clear policies that prohibit content like gratuitous violence, hate speech and incitement to commit violent acts, and we remove videos violating these policies when flagged by our users,” the statement read. “We also terminate any account registered by a member of a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and used in an official capacity to further its interests.”

To the best of anyone’s knowledge, the First Baptist Church in Moreland is not a foreign terrorist organization. The pastor says he simply wanted to inform his church about the threat posed by Islamic terrorists and pray for the victims of their Islamic slaughter. Is that hate speech?

“I’m literally terminated—like I’m the terrorist,” the pastor said.

Ausbun said what happened to him could happen to other American pastors under the guise of banning “hate speech.”

“Anything a pastor preaches on—whether it be radical Islam, homosexuality, the teachings of Jesus—YouTube can label that hate speech and censor their sermons,” he said.

The Georgia preacher said he decided to contact me because people need to be aware of YouTube’s censorship.

“ISIS is recruiting Americans to get trained over there, and we know what they are going to do,” he said. “They are not going to stay in Iraq and Syria. They’re coming back to our country.”

Pastors should be speaking out on this. This is a grave concern to our Christian brothers and sisters who are

literally dying for their faith, and it could affect our lives here.”

In the meantime, Pastor Ausbun has launched a new video channel—on Vimeo.

Todd Starnes *is host of Fox News & Commentary, heard on hundreds of radio stations. Sign up for his American Dispatch newsletter, be sure to join his Facebook page, and follow him on Twitter. His latest book is God Less America.*