

Why Franklin Graham Is Calling Out This Major Court Ruling

One of the nation's most-respected evangelical Christian leaders denounced a federal court ruling regarding a Washington state coach who was punished for praying after a football game.

On Wednesday, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the Bremerton School District was justified in suspending Coach Joe Kennedy after he took a knee and prayed silently at midfield after a football game.

"When Kennedy kneeled and prayed on the 50-yard line immediately after games while in view of students and parents, he spoke as a public employee, not as a private citizen, and his speech therefore was constitutionally unprotected," the 9th Circuit wrote.

The evangelical Christian was suspended in 2015 when he defied school officials and continued his post-game religious ritual. He was not rehired when his contract expired.

"An objective student observer would see an influential supervisor do something no ordinary citizen could do—perform a Christian religious act on secured school property while surrounded by players—simply because he is a coach," the judges wrote.

Franklin Graham, the president of Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, spoke out against the ruling on the Todd Starnes Show.

"It's sad this has happened but it really doesn't surprise me," Graham said on the radio program. "We find these courts

and these judges are making these decisions against the will of the people.”

While saddened by the ruling, Graham said he was not surprised by the 9th Circuit Court.

“We have judges out there who hate God and hate His standards and disrespect the people who follow God,” he said on the radio show.

First Liberty Institute lawyer Jeremy Dys said the court’s decision could have a significant impact on football coaches across the nation.

“Now all coaches across the country stand under the prospect of being prevented from engaging in any outward displays of religion,” Dys told me. “That includes crossing yourself or even taking a knee to pray.”