

Christ in Prophecy

Conference 36: Shackelford "Religious Freedom Under Fire"

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Religious freedom in America is under fire. Actually, it is even worse than that. The bottom line is that a war has been declared on Christianity in this nation. In the years ahead, every possible attempt is going to be made to confine Christianity to church buildings. For a presentation by a person who is fighting on the front lines to defend Christian liberties, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. The theme of our 2015 annual Bible conference was "Messages for a Rebellious Nation." We had six outstanding speakers at the conference, and one of them was Kelly Shackelford, the founder and director of The Liberty Institute located in Plano, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. This is the largest law firm in the nation that is devoted solely to the defense of Christian liberties. Kelly's specific topic was "Religious Freedom Under Fire: An Update From the Front Lines." And folks, I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that what he had to share came as a great shock to our audience. By the time he finished speaking, it was clear to everyone that we are engaged in a war against Christianity and we had better sit up and take notice. As you view his presentation, please keep in mind that he made it just two weeks after our nation's Supreme Court had legalized same-sex marriage. Here now, is Kelly Shackelford.

Kelly Shackelford's Presentation

Kelly Shackelford: And you know one of the things I try to do, I speak in a lot of groups and a lot of times I speak it's not a group like this it's a group of people who know the Lord and of people who don't have a faith at all. And so, to them they ask the question so this might help you as you talk to your friends who maybe haven't come to know the Lord. Why should they care about religious freedom? Or should they care? And the answer is yes. And there are a lot, lot of reasons our Founders wrote about this a lot. I mean this is our first freedom. They understood that if you lose this freedom you'll lose all your freedoms. And I can't tell you how many people from Eastern European countries have come up to me after I talked and said, "I'm not a person of faith at all but I totally agree with what you are doing. I saw this happen in my country. When religious freedom goes, then all your freedoms are about to leave." And I want to show you one quick 90 second video that again any person, whether they are person of faith at all I think will get the point of why religious freedom is so important to our country.

Video: Clay Christensen, Professor at the Harvard Business School

Clay Christensen: Some time ago I had conversation with a Marxist Economist from China. He was coming to the end of a Fulbright Fellowship here in Boston. But I asked him if he had learned anything that was surprising or unexpected. And without any hesitation he said, "Yeah, I had no idea how critical religion is to the functioning of democracy. The reason why democracy works," he said, "is not because the government was designed to oversee what everybody does. But rather democracy works because most people, most of the time voluntarily choose to obey the law. And in your past most Americans attended a church or synagogue every week and they were taught there by people who they respected." My friend went on to say, "That American's followed these rules because they had come to believe that they weren't just accountable to society, they were accountable to God." My Chinese friend heightened, a vague but nagging concern I've harbored inside that as religion loses its influence over the lives of American's what will happen to our democracy? Where are the institutions that are going to teach the next generation of Americans that they too need to voluntarily choose to obey the laws? Because if you take away religion you can't hire enough police.

Kelly Shackelford: So, that being the case this being very important, how are we doing on religious freedom? Again I don't think most people are in the dark on this at this point. I mean we've got pastors having their sermons subpoenaed not in Massachusetts or somewhere, in Houston. Right? We've got, I mean if you watch every day you'll see something. We just do a survey, this is our survey for last year of all the attacks on religious freedom. There are about six or seven a page, and you can see this is everything from a seven year old boy was caught praying over his meal and physically lifted out of his seat and taken to the principal's office and told to never do that again while he was at school. To senior citizens who are actually told that their federally funded meals were going to be taken away from them because they were praying over their meals and that would violate separation of church and state. It's in the North. It's in the South. It's people of wealth. It's people who are poor. There's literally if you go through this you'll realize how pervasive this is.

This is a real issue. This is a real battle. And we've had years, we do this every year. We've had years literally where it is doubling from one year to the next in the increase, but it continually is increasing in hostility and in the attacks. And when you realize religious freedom is the first freedom that this tells you; you know it kinds of reminds me of when we had old cars we used to have a little red light on the dashboard and when that light came on it was telling you that you were low on oil and if you didn't do something your engine was going to throw a rod, or freeze up. That's what this is a sign of for our country. This is a sign that our country is in danger when you see this kind of attacks, and the ever increasing numbers on religious freedom.

Now that would be bad enough if we didn't have the Supreme Court decision we just had recently. And you know the big debate now, or not debate really but what the other side tries to pretend is well this won't have any impact on religious freedom. And that's the average American thinks. Well what does marriage have to do with me? You know those two men or two women can go get married, it's not going to affect me. Oh, yes it is. It is going to affect you. Why would you say that? I'll just tick off a few examples. Tax exempt status of every religious organization is now going to be under attack. You say, "Oh, how could you say that?" Why I didn't say it the Solicitor General of the United States said it during the oral argument at the Supreme Court on this case. They asked him and he said, "Look if we do this decision and create this same-sex marriage as a constitutional right then how can we allow people to have tax exempt status if they are discriminating against that right?" And you thought the Solicitor

General would say, "Oh, we're not going to go after everybody's tax exempt statues." No, the answer of the Solicitor General of the United States was quote, "that will be an issues." Ok. It took I think 24 hours for "Time Magazine" to come out with their editorial after their decision saying, "Religious groups need to give up their tax exempt status if they have beliefs on marriage being a man and woman."

But that's just the beginning. You know you can look at other countries that have done this and you think, "Well, ok, let's say I don't really care about my church and any of the religious groups that have tax exempt status. It won't affect me in other ways." Well do you listen to the radio? Do you watch TV? How can you let people have an FCC license if they are engaging in discrimination against people in light of this new Supreme Court case? I mean look at Canada you're not allowed to speak out against gay marriage on the air. Ask Dr. Dobson every time his shows were carried in Canada they couldn't be carried on those issues. Ok. And I can guarantee you that if you have a pastor or a ministry or somebody who now you listen to on the radio or TV I can't tell you they're going to lose, I sure they won't lose we're going to fight with the Constitution at our back. But will there be an attack against everyone who holds those licenses, or has someone on that has those views? Absolutely there is going to be an attack.

What if you're a Christian college? It's already started. There are already calls for Christian colleges who have tax exempt status that they need to have housing for gay couples. You know if they have married housing they have to they can't be discriminatory. I mean we could go down a long list of things. You've seen all the probably the news about the bakers, the florist, the photographers who are actually being persecuted out of business. The most recent one of course that is getting a lot of attention are the two bakers, the husband and wife that are bakers from Oregon who simply said they couldn't--they would be happy to make a cake for these people, in fact they did before but they couldn't make a wedding cake for two women because that would have them participating in a wedding and that would violate their faith. Well right now not only has their business been bankrupted but they have \$135,000 fine for sticking to their religious beliefs. And the order also ordered them not to speak about their beliefs in a way that would express any discrimination against sexual orientation. So literally they wouldn't be able to speak and say marriage is a man and a woman. Now that is continuing to go, it has another appeal but these are the kind of things that are happening.

We've got Barronelle Stutzman 72 year old grandmother she's actually being now prosecuted because she wouldn't do a flower arrangement for two men and their wedding. She would sell them flowers, she loved them. She said, "I can't arrange the flowers then I'm giving my expression to support something that my Lord says is not marriage." So she's not only looking at the last decision in that case which is not only is her business now in jeopardy but they've said that she's going to be personally liable and they can come after her home. Ok, a 72 year old grandmother because she wouldn't do a flower arrangement.

Now I could keep going through these cases but the point is there are a lot of these attacks. And the thing that should bring it home to everybody is I ask people, "Well you think this isn't going to affect you. Have you ever thought about what is going to happen in all the professions?" They say, "Well what do you mean?" I said, "Do you think all professions have ethics codes, they have codes of conduct. Do you think that this issue isn't going to be brought into those codes of conduct? And it's not going to be a question of, well if you want to be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a real estate agent or psychologist, or you just keep on going down the line then you can't have these types of discriminatory views. You've got sign this statement. I mean you're literally talking

about people maybe losing their profession. You might think well that is pretty radical. It's already happening. We've already got cases on this. So, now with this Supreme Court case you think it's not going to be even more energized? This is going to impact every person in this country. And these attacks are going to come in all of these different arenas trying to use this to violate people's religious freedom. And I'm not saying we're going to lose those battles, but what I'm saying is we are going to have those battles now. And a lot of people say you know they saw the decision and they are very down and depressed and they think, golly it's over. And my really perspective as a guy who does religious freedom is that battle is literally just beginning. We are now deciding as a country whether we are going to keep religious freedom as our first freedom. The reason people came here is they left because they were not allowed to hold their religious beliefs that were different from the government. They came here because here was a place you could dissent, you could disagree, you could hold to your religious conscience and not be punished by the government. And now everything I just went through with you are examples of the government trying to punish people for having different beliefs on marriage. Ok. This to me this is in the DNA of the American people as much as anything. The idea the right to dissent, to disagree with the government especially on a matter of conscious and faith. And so the battle really here is just beginning, but it is a battle.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: For those of you who may have tuned in late, let me explain that you are watching a presentation by Kelly Shackelford that was made at our last Bible conference. The theme of the conference was "Messages for a Rebellious Nation." Kelly is the founder and director of The Liberty Institute which is the largest law firm in the nation that is devoted solely to the defense of Christian liberties. Let's return now to Kelly as he starts talking about the assaults on Christian liberties that are taking place in the military today.

Kelly Shackelford Presentation

Kelly Shackelford: You know two years ago we had three areas, we said religious freedom we are here to protect and to restore religious freedom in our schools, for our churches, and in the public arena. Well now if you look we have four, we had to open a whole flank just for the military because of what was going on. And I think most people have seen the cases where they are going after all the veteran's memorials that have religious imagery like a cross. Probably the first one of these our case was the Mojavi Desert Cross it was put up in 1934 by the hands of World War I vets who had come back from the war. And it was put up in the middle of the desert, 1.6 million acres of desert. And it sat there for 70 years. It's just a lone seven foot cross with a little plaque on the bottom that said, "For the Dead of all Wars," and had their VFW post. Seventy years until somebody from the ACLU said hey we found this cross and brought a lawsuit to have it torn down after 70 years. Unbelievably the Federal District Court and Court of Appeals said, "Tear it down." We jumped in at that point on behalf of all the major veteran's groups the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, American Ex-Prisoners of War, and the VFW and we said, "No, absolutely not." Now while it was on appeal I just want to show you a picture of what the court ordered be done to that memorial. I mean that's a bag with a chain around the bottom with a padlock on the bottom. Of course what's great is you still know it's the cross, but what a picture. What a picture. I mean you look at that and you think what is this? The USSR? You think it's not America. Now some people say why do you make a big deal about this? You went to the Supreme Court got this reversed, that cross is back up, true. Fox

News was there with a satellite truck when the cross went back up. It was carried all over the country. We won at the Supreme Court 5-4, ok, you change one vote this is the law; this picture is the law. So it just shows you how close we are in the kind of attacks that are even starting.

At least you would say well at least these attacks against veteran memorials are over. No. We now have the Mount Soledad Cross which has been up since the 1950's. The last order in that court was tear it down. We've got a stay of that, but we're still fighting that case. In Maryland the Peace Cross that was put up literally through the funds, yeah that's the peace cross right there. Up for 90, over 90 years. Put up by mothers who lost their sons in the war. And now there is a lawsuit to tear it down because it's a cross. We are seeing these all across the country. We have five different ones that we are defending in different places. But the problem is these attacks aren't just on the outward symbols. And that is very important if you've talked to anybody who's lived in these Eastern European countries the first thing they do is they take down the religious symbols and they put up the secular symbols. So it is very powerful and very important.

But it goes much further than just the symbols; I means we're having this happen internally within the military. Sergeant Phillip Monk 19 ½ years in the Air Force. Was in Iraq; patched up over 600 people. You know when you see guys come back without an arm or a leg it was Sergeant Monk who was patching those people up. Had to clean the blood of his buddies off his boots. Came back to the United States for his lesbian commander to say to him, "I need you to agree with me on gay marriage." And he said, "Look this is the Air Force. We can have different beliefs on other things as long as we are consistent on the policies and the mission of the Air Force." She said, "No, no, no I need you to tell me right now if you agree with me on gay marriage." Well he wouldn't answer the question because he knew she wasn't going to like his answer. So she relived him of his duties after 19 ½ years. Now he was on the phone with us wondering, you know look, he said, "My pension vests at 20 years. My sons, my wife, I could lose everything if I oppose what's going on here." About three days later he was having a Bible study with his three boys and it just naturally occurred in his Bible study and before he knew what he had said, he said to his boys, "Sons, you have to be willing to stand for your faith." And when he did it just convicted him. And he picked up the phone and he called us and he said, "Let's go. You know my sons are watching me." And we filed a complaint. We have on staff a JAG, a former military litigator for about 10 years in the military taught at the Naval Academy. Did everything correct like you're supposed to. The first thing they did was read Sergeant Monk his Miranda Rights and opened a criminal investigation against him to try to intimidate him. Ok. He told me, he said, "I'm getting all these e-mails and texts from people I served with in Iraq and they're saying 'Phillip I'm praying for you.' 'Phillip I'm behind you I just can't come out publically.'" And he said, "You know I never knew any of these guys were Christians because we were not allowed to talk about that."

And that told me everything about how things had gone wrong in the military. I mean George Washington when established the military the first thing he did is he gave everybody a Bible and established chaplains, because he understood if you don't have religious freedom in the military you are going to have a really bad military because they need to be able to rely on their faith. They need that. And so what's been going on there has been incredible.

And we have two new cases some of you have heard about these. So Sergeant Monk the good news is it ended well. You know and I'll tell you a little bit about that later. But we've got two more that we don't know how they're going to end that are probably ones you've hear about

because they are all over the national scene. One is Chaplain Modder, Wes Modder, guys he's not only a chaplain he's the Chaplain like to the Special Forces like Seal Team Six. Been deployed fourteen times. Perfect record; until all of a sudden a few months ago some people complained because in 1 on 1 counseling he was asked about sex and what the Bible says about sex, like homosexuality, etcetera. And he talked about sex being only proper within marriage, and marriage of a man and a woman. Which is exactly what he's an Assembly of God Pastor what he should do in accordance with his faith. He's now been detached for cause, meaning he has been kicked out of his position out of 19 ½ years for being quote "intolerant".

Well if our Chaplains can't answer a biblical question with a biblical answer, then they are not Chaplains anymore. And so this is a fight about whether we're going to have Chaplains anymore in this country. Now Wes Modder is standing up and we are going to do everything we can. We are fighting all the way through the system. And then if we have to go into court after that if the Secretary of Navy doesn't correct this, if that's what's necessary then we'll go into court. Because they violated numerous laws when they did this to Wes. There are specific laws protecting Chaplains that they've violated. But the point is we're having a fight here.

The last one you probably heard about is Monifa Sterling who was court-martialed. And by that I don't mean she was threatened by a court martial, she was convicted, court-martialed for having a Scripture verse taped to the bottom of her work computer. Ok. And we are now having to appeal this to the what's called the Court of Military Appeals which is essentially the Military Supreme Court because the Marine Court of Appeals affirmed this said that, "Somebody might be offended if they walked by her work station." Yeah, these little weak Marines, I'm sure they would just be torn apart by her Scripture verse. You know. And then in another place in the opinion they say, "Well the Religious Freedoms Restoration Act doesn't protect her because this really wasn't a religious exercise." So it is so religious that it offends people in one part of the opinion. And in the other part it's not religious. It's just gobbledygook you know; it's ridiculous. And so we're going to the highest level. We hope to get a precedent that makes clear throughout all branches of the military that religious freedom applies to them. And so the military is a place we're having to fight that we didn't even used to. But it is very important because if we lost the military that is a lot of times how you lose your country. I mean if you end up pushing people of faith and religious freedom out of the military eventually you end up with I'm just following orders. You end up with Hitler's SS. And you get the wrong leader and you lose the country, you lose your freedoms. So this is a very important area to battle.

The last area I'd mention to you is the work place. And again I could give you a lot of examples but I just want to give you one. I think most people have heard about the Hobby Lobby case, right? Very few people know what was argued in the Hobby Lobby case. Our government the Solicitor General of the United States got up in front of all justices, this was their main argument and argued that once you go into for profit business you are making the decision to wave your religious freedoms. And quote "you now play by the government's rules." Now they lost on that argument. But they picked up a number of votes from justices for the first time in our country. So, you know this is a battle now where if they can take over the workplace they take over where people live most of their waking hours. And religious freedom is basically extinguished, or pushed into your home and your church is where you can experience it.

Now it's not just employers those, its employees. We now have a whole stack of cases, we never used to have any cases like what I am about to describe to you, now we've got a number of them. We filed one this week. We're filing another next week. We're filing another the week

after that. Cases where people are losing their jobs not because of anything they say at work or do at work, but because their employer is finding out where they go to church or what they believe and if they believe marriage is man and a woman. And you think, "Well surely not." Yeah, I can give you example after example. A lot of people know who Craig James is, played at SMU, was all All-American ended up being an All-Pro played for the New England Patriots and then became a broadcaster. And was a broadcaster for many years until he decided to run for Congress, actually for Senate. He ran against Ted Cruz which didn't work out so well for him, right? Ted Cruz won. But during that race they were asked a question, "What is your position on marriage?" Well Craig James said, "I'm with God's definition, marriage is a man and a woman." Ok. So he loses the race. He decides I'm going back into sport broadcasting. Fox Sports hires him and sends out a press release of the accolades of all his background what an incredible broadcaster he is. Which he is. And he got on the first night did a great job. The next day he was fired. Why? Well we don't have to guess because the PR head of Fox Sports said to the "Dallas Morning News" that it was his answer in the campaign they found out after he was on the air because some people complained in their main office in Los Angeles, that they didn't like his views of marriage. And that quote, "those kind of views won't play well in our HR department." So think about this they fired him not because of any of his work, but because of their bigotry against his religious beliefs outside of work. Clear violation of the law.

But it's not just there we've got a guy by the name of Eric Walsh he was the director of public health for the city of Pasadena. State of Georgia said we want you to be our director of public health for a whole region of the state. He accepted the job. Before he gets there some activists from California call the Georgia State Department saying, "You need to look at this beliefs and where he goes to church." We now have copies of the e-mails of the government officials divvying up the sermons from his church and deciding who is going to read which sermon. The next day they fired him because he believed marriage was a man and a woman. Ok. I just want you to think about this. They fired him not because of anything he did or said at work but because of what was said in his church on Sunday. So, this is the attack. I had a friend of mine who is a Barrister from the UK and he said, "You know this started happening to us about seven years ago and we were a little slow to respond and we lost these cases." He said, "If you lose these cases you don't just lose these cases, it quickly becomes that those views are a danger to the profession, you name the profession. And eventually people have to decide do you want your profession, or would you rather be able to live out your faith?" And he said, "About 70% of our country decided I'll keep my profession." And he said, "That's when you'll lose your country." He said, "You better not just win these cases. You better inflict pain when you win these cases and send a message that this doesn't happen in the United States of America." And that is what we are trying to do. And that's what should happen. [clapping]

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you. Incidentally we have presented only about half of Kelly Shackelford's outstanding presentation. In a moment, our announcer will tell you how you can get a copy of the full presentation.

End of Program