



Christianity and Religious Freedom: On a Candlestick or Under a Bushel?

Nowadays, in order to justify each and every sin under the sun, each and every assault upon the moral fiber of our family, community, and nation, one approach fits all: opponents of everything good and right, sensible and salutary need only push the claim that their privacy has been violated.



But how can that be? Just what is it that is so private about privacy that it cannot tolerate the gentle voice of persuasion of someone else who is exercising, in print or by voice, the convictions of his heart and soul? Or at least, what is so very private about the kind of privacy that privacy advocates advocate?

Privacy advocates contend that traditional Christians and Jews have no right to express and defend their religious and moral convictions in the classroom, in the work place or at the seat of government, because faith is sacred, and if sacred, then it must be private. Public discussion, public debate, public teaching, public endorsement, therefore, are public no-no's, being public infringements upon the inalienable rights of those with contrary religious views.

But how well thought out is this position, really?

Christianity Is by Nature Public

Prohibiting public religious speech under the guise of "protecting one's private religious rights" ignores the very public, evangelical nature of religion — especially of Christianity.

It is oxymoronic to tell a Christian, "You're free, but keep it to yourself ... or else!"

Such legal chicanery is reminiscent of the "neutral" policy of the rulers and scribes of Peter and John's day, who, after a notable public miracle led to the conversion of thousands, thought it politically wise not to publicly deny the miracle. "But that it spread no further among the people," they commanded Peter and John (behind closed doors) to speak no more of the name by which the healing took place.

That is to say, "You are free to heal lame men in the name of Jesus Christ — but don't you dare say his name in the process, nor even hint that it was by his power that he was healed ... or we'll throw you in prison!" Which, in fact, the rulers and scribes later did do.

One has to wonder who is fooling whom? Can we really protect "private" beliefs by imposing public silence under threat of fine, imprisonment, job loss, and/or public humiliation? Christ's charge to his apostles was to:

- go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature, (1)
- prophesy ... before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings, (2)
- be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them, (3)
- [and] be ready always to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man that asketh of you a reason for the hope that is in you. (4)

My faith's baptismal charge includes the very public invitation to "mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all



Written by [Steve Farrell](#) on May 26, 2011

things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death.” (5)

Standing as a witness of God at all times and in all things, and in all places, does not mean to the devout Christian that he ought to share the message of Christianity only with his or her spouse and children (though he should), or only with his or her fellow church members in the security, sometimes artificiality, of a church setting (though he is called to serve there as well). But it means this too: that the witness of God and Christ think of the Church setting and the family setting as a training ground, a refueling station, a repair shop and hospital ward, places where the faithful Christian might be equipped, nurtured, invigorated, and if necessary restored to good health, to go back out in the world to serve his fellow brothers and sisters (all of us being children of a Common Father), to bring them the love and joy and purpose in life we feel, and to show them by word and by deed the Plan of Happiness for this life, and of immortality and eternal life in the world to come.

Yes, standing as a witness of God at all times and in all things, and in all places we shall be in, even unto death, is also about living and sharing the gospel 24/7/365 in the swirl of temptation and spiritual warfare that is the world, the public world, till the very end of our lives.

To stand as such a witness means to this writer that I try to be honest, that I try to stand up for fixed moral principles, and that I try to imbue my writing with moral and religious persuasion. To stand as a witness to this researcher means that I look for the hand of God in historical events (as the American Founding Generation did), that I look for the great morals to be learned from heroes great and small, that I should not be afraid to see both good and evil in the works and issues that I evaluate, and then to boldly share my convictions and conclusions with others.

To this citizen, to so stand means that when my government endeavors to make lawful that which looks to shred the moral fabric that holds my nation, my church and my family together, I lobby for something better. I lobby for a return to the values of the American Founders who grounded in the morals and faith of the Judeo-Christian religion, gave us the world’s greatest, freest, most successful republic, one which this citizen believes, was raised up of God.

Indeed, the teachings of Christianity and the promptings of my conscience become the measuring stick by which I judge all things — and I claim that my right.

Therefore, who should stay my hand or your hand in this, the defense of what our mind, our soul and our God say is right and our duty as Christians? And who would in clear conscience say that to do so is a defense of religious freedom, of the so-called right to privacy, a right that does not even exist in the Constitution? The truth is, so long as our faith does not cross the line and physically or legally force someone else to believe as we believe, and worship as we worship, then our right to worship “how, where, and what we may” is as inalienable as is theirs, and so no one has a right to deprive us of the exercise of our faith by physical or legal force.

The bottom line, standing as a witness of God at all times and in all things, and in all places, even unto death does not mean that Christians ought to be forced to hide their light under a bushel, nor hoard their leaven for their loaf only — but that they might be free, as everyone else is free, to lovingly share what they believe will best bless families, communities, nations, and all humanity to live in peace and harmony.

Footnotes:

1. The Holy Bible, King James Version, Mark 16:15.2. Ibid., Revelations 10:113. Ibid., Mark 13:94. Ibid.,



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1 Peter 3:155. The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Mosiah 18:9

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