

Dear Friends in Christ,

The first thing a man says when he tells the truth is “All men are liars!” (Ps 116:11). For years, American conservatives have rightly sounded the alarm regarding the suppression of speech in our public places - colleges, news outlets, and social media feeds. They made fun of college students for being snowflakes who said that speech that made them uncomfortable was violence. The 1st Amendment was being assaulted, and we needed to protect our right to free speech.

But then Hamas attacked Israel on October 7th, and those who used to call for free speech were calling for censorship. (This article isn't about Hamas or Israel - I commented on that conflict a few months ago.) Claudine Gay, the president of Harvard, resigned because of things said by students on Harvard's campus. You may think that what students are saying on college campuses is disgusting, but if you believe in the freedom of speech, you must protect their right to say it.

Bill Ackman, who's Jewish and an investor, went after Gay because she wouldn't say it violated Harvard's code of conduct for students to say anti-Israeli things. (I really don't want to dive into the sulfur pit of deciding if something is racist or not - that is a meaningless game these days.) Gay's testimony in front of Congress was hypocritical; if another protected class, like the LGBT community was protested against, she would've had no problems saying that speech went against Harvard's code of conduct. Ackman also went after Gay for plagiarism, saying that plagiarism disqualifies her from her academic position. It soon came out that Ackman's wife, an MIT professor, was found guilty of plagiarism herself. Ackman defended his wife for plagiarism while still calling for Gay to resign.

Okay, got all that? Both sides have double-standards. All men are liars. Let's do away with double-standards; we need one standard, and that standard is the Word of God. What I'm arguing for here is that the 1st Amendment has biblical support. Tyrants want to suppress speech. Christians aren't interested in suppressing speech - we're interested in making the world full of Christians who glorify God with their speech.

One of the things Christians in government get accused of is wanting to implement anti-blasphemy laws. Well, we already have those, and more are coming. Hate speech laws are anti-blasphemy laws; the problem is that it's the government defining what hate is, and they're not using the Bible to define love or hate. Our current government is incapable of telling us what a woman is, so I'm not going to trust them to define anything.

We must insist on the freedom of speech. Jesus was killed for His speech - He claimed to be the Son of God. Stephen was killed for his speech. The Pope wanted to kill Luther for what he said, and what Luther said was what the Bible said. Regulated speech suppresses the truth.

Does freedom of speech mean people are going to say things we disagree with or blasphemous things? Yes. But I'm not afraid of that. If I ask the government to censor others, they'll do so gladly before coming after me.

We must insist on the right of others to speak, even if they're wrong. The words of men disappear. The Word of the Lord endures forever. Truth lasts forever, and so it has nothing to fear. Jesus Christ is Lord, and the church's mission is to evangelize to the whole world so that all would make that confession. We aren't going to get that done by suppressing speech, but by preaching. We aren't going to get that done by drowning others we disagree with, but by baptizing them with water combined with the Word. We aren't going to get that done by starving the blasphemers, but by leading them to repentance so that they can feast on our Lord's body and blood while hearing these words, "Given and shed you for you for the forgiveness of sins."