

# RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND CITIZENSHIP SUNDAY



June 29, 2014

## Why Christians Everywhere Should Stand for Religious Liberty

Our religious convictions aren't reduced to simply the opinions we hide in our hearts or sing in our hymns. Our religious convictions inform the way we live.

We support freedom of conscience for all as we want neither to be oppressed nor to oppress others. We do not ask the government to bless our doctrinal convictions or to impose them on others. We simply ask the government not to set itself up as lord of our consciences.

Many Americans will disagree with us heartily about the things we believe. But even Americans of no religious faith at all have an interest in the protection of these liberties. Do we really want the sort of civil society in which the consciences of the people are so easily swept aside by government action?

If the federal government can force organizations and businesses to pave over their own consciences, to choose between being believers and being citizens, what will stop the government from imposing its will on anyone's conscience next?

As Christians, religious liberty is about more than political principle for us. We believe, as our Lord commands, that we should render unto Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. The conscience does not bear the image of Caesar, and cannot be swept into the federal treasury by government fiat.

Let's pray that our court system would, like Jefferson and Madison in the founding era, recognize that religious liberty and freedom of conscience aren't government bailouts but inalienable rights granted by the Creator himself. Let's pray, as the Apostle Paul commands us, for "all who are in high positions, that we may live a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Tim. 2:2).

This issue is about whether the government is "under God" or all-encompassing. Our politicians, on their best days, might aspire to Mount Rushmore, but they don't reign from Mount Zion.

**-Russell D. Moore**



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A small state and a large church—this is why Paul instructed Timothy to pray for a government that would allow space for the Church to pursue its gospel mission (1 Tim. 2:2). Governments that allow religious freedom, whether acknowledging it or not, are doing the work of God. They are self-policing by voluntarily restricting themselves from spheres where they have no reign or jurisdiction.

Government is instituted by God, yes, but there is precedent for resisting a government that invades the human conscience. Jesus taught us that Caesar has limited authority. He is not God and we are not made in his likeness (Matt. 22:20-22).

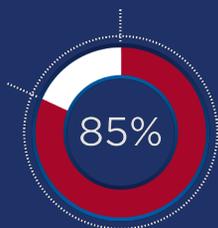
So Christians who advocate for religious liberty are holding the ropes of those who labor to plant churches, evangelize, and equip the body of Christ in a society. As Southern Baptists, we point, with pride, to the work of an unrelenting Baptist, John Leland, who fought tirelessly for religious liberty during the colonial period. His influence, along with others like Roger Williams, helped enshrine religious liberty in the Bill of Rights.

Those of us who live under the umbrella of freedom, working to spread the gospel in our communities, would do well to not forget the work of men like Leland and Williams, who tilled the cultural ground so we might see a harvest of spiritual fruit. Minimizing the fight for liberty is a backhanded slap to someone who once held our ropes.

The work of those who advocate for religious liberty and the work of those who preach the gospel every week in churches are not at odds with each other. So to our gospel-loving colleagues who labor faithfully in communities across the country, we say, "You go down and we'll hold the ropes."

**-Andrew T. Walker and Dan Darling**

Think Christian Photographer Has Right to Turn Down Same-Sex Wedding Job



Rasmussen

Is Religious Liberty on the decline in America?

Among Protestant Senior Pastors

70% Agree

27% Disagree

3% Unsure

Among Americans

54% Agree

38% Disagree

9% Unsure

LifeWayResearch.com

## Important Resources on Religious Liberty (Visit [erlc.com/liberty](http://erlc.com/liberty))

- ▶ "Hobby Lobby and the Supreme Court, A Call to Prayer" by Russell D. Moore
- ▶ "Of Conscience and Cakes" by Russell D. Moore
- ▶ "The Quaker Exemption and Religious Liberty Today" by Thomas Kidd
- ▶ "Holding the Ropes" by Andrew Walker and Daniel Darling
- ▶ Canon and Culture Podcast - Episode 5 w/ Kim Colby, lead attorney for Hobby Lobby
- ▶ Questions and Ethics Podcast - "How will the Supreme Court's decision on the Hobby Lobby case affect us?"

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