

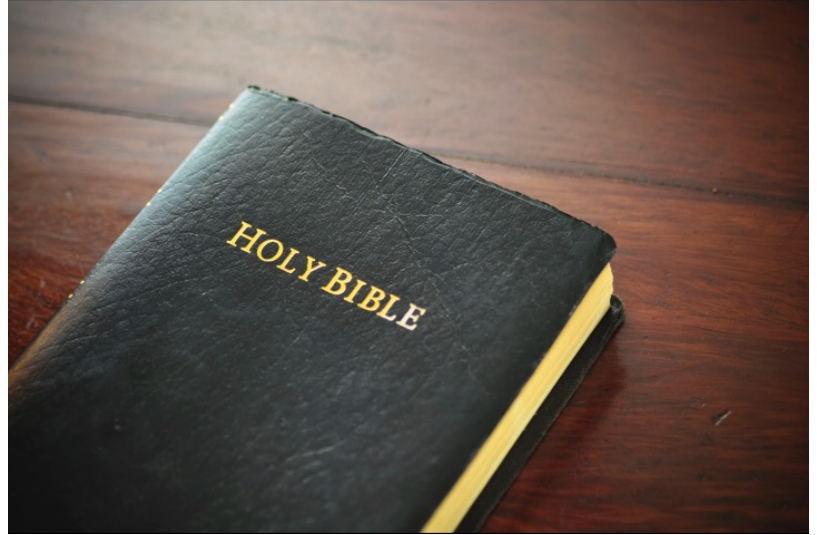


Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 20, 2024

## Seattle Street Preacher Arrested When Leftists Assaulted Him Triumphs Over City

A Seattle man who was arrested twice for preaching at public events scored a “complete victory” when a judge granted him an injunction and ordered the city to pay him damages.

Last week, U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein issued a permanent injunction prohibiting Seattle police from repeating their offenses against Matthew Meinecke. Rothstein’s consent order “represents a complete victory for the Pastor,” said a post by [First Liberty Institute](#), which represented Meinecke.



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According to First Liberty:

The consent order provides Pastor Meinecke all the relief he sought in the case. He is now free to read his Bible or share the gospel on the streets of Seattle without fear of arrest. He also received monetary damages for the two false arrests, along with reasonable attorney fees and expenses.

### Mission Aborted

Meinecke’s troubles began when he decided to preach at a June 24, 2022, protest of the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. First Liberty senior counsel Nate Kellum told [CBN News](#) that Meinecke, who claims to have converted people through his preaching, considered the angry, pro-abortion crowd a mission field.

“So, he took his Bible and he goes out there to read the Bible,” Kellum said. “He has very earnest pro-life beliefs, but that was not his purpose. He really just wanted to share the Gospel.”

Not surprisingly, his audible Bible reading “was not received well,” Kellum added.

After about an hour, protesters surrounded Meinecke and began hurling expletives at him. One protester snatched Meinecke’s Bible. The preacher extracted another Bible from his bag and resumed reading. Another protester then grabbed it and tore pages out of it. As Antifa protesters, some of whom were wearing body armor, approached, Meinecke took hold of a traffic sawhorse. Five of them picked Meinecke and the sawhorse up, carried them across the street, and dropped them on concrete.

Meinecke kept right on reading the Bible, though, and soon was assaulted again, losing one of his shoes. He told [ChurchLeaders](#) that “he was also kicked in the head so hard that he blacked out during the rally.”

When the police finally showed up, whom did they arrest, the peaceful preacher or the left-wing thugs assaulting him? This being uber-progressive Seattle, they naturally chose the former. They told Meinecke he would have to move somewhere else or face arrest for obstruction, which the Seattle



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municipal code defines as disobeying an officer's order to cease a behavior that creates a risk of injury to any person.

Meinecke was taken to the police station and kept there for about two hours, then released without being charged.

### **Arresting Gays**

Two days later, Meinecke showed up at Seattle's PrideFest, where his Bible reading was equally unwelcome. Once again, he was subjected to profanity and mockery. One protester poured water on his Bible; another stole it and threw it in a toilet. Once again, he was arrested for refusing to leave.

ChurchLeaders reported:

It confused Meinecke that people were more offended by him preaching than by the naked grown men who were walking around children at the Pride event. Those men were not arrested.

"We've got a city full of crime. We've got needles all over the place. We've got lawless homeless camps everywhere. We've got assaults. We've got broken glass. We've got Antifa running the place. But they've got time to send in 10 police officers to arrest a street preacher reading his Bible in a park," Meinecke said during a video after his arrest.

This time, Meinecke was charged with obstruction but was released on bail. At his hearing, he was informed that the city attorney's office had decided not to press charges against him but reserved the right to do so "in the future."

### **An Appealing Decision**

Meinecke sued the city and the police in federal court, asking for exactly what he eventually received: a permanent injunction, damages, costs, and attorneys' fees. After the district court denied his motion, he appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

In April, a three-judge panel reversed the district court's decision. Their [opinion](#), authored by Judge Jay Bybee, rejected all the city's arguments.

"The City's enforcement actions against Meinecke are content-based heckler's vetoes," wrote Bybee. Citing one precedent, he elaborated: "The prototypical heckler's veto case is one in which the government silences *particular* speech or a *particular* speaker 'due to an anticipated disorderly or violent reaction of the audience.'" (Emphasis in original.)

"The Supreme Court has emphasized as 'firmly settled' that 'the public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas are themselves offensive to some of their hearers, or simply because bystanders object to peaceful and orderly demonstrations,'" penned Bybee.

The city tried to claim that officers were merely enforcing "time, place, or manner" restrictions on speech, not trying to prevent Meinecke from preaching. But, Bybee observed, "When the police single out a nonthreatening speaker for discipline, the government is simply choosing sides in the debate and using the obstruction statute to enforce its choice."

The judges sent the case back to the district court to issue an injunction; Rothstein complied.

"This result is only fitting. The government should never silence the speech of a citizen just because an audience dislikes what it's hearing," said Kellum. "Pastor Meinecke is thrilled to put this case behind



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him and get back to sharing the Gospel on the streets of Seattle.”



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