

# Two Years Later: Where Are We Now?

## (Part 7)

By PAUL J. SCHARF

Are you and your ministry prepared for the next crisis that will inevitably flow from these “perilous times” in which we live, “in the last days” (2 Tim. 3:1)?

SermonAudio is preparing—which will allow all of its broadcasters to be better suited for the next cultural calamity, whatever that may be.

The company is building The Vault—a secure space on the second floor of the Mack Library, on the campus of Bob Jones University, which will house new technological infrastructure, providing security and independence for “the largest and most trusted library of audio sermons,” upon which so many churches have come to rely.

SermonAudio founder Steven Lee summed it up simply: “This will protect us from becoming cancelled,” he stated.

“We are in the business of trying to protect even the smallest church,” he said. “Nobody is working on a solution for the small church. So that is where we come in.”

Jesus predicted a day when “the love many will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12). There are few terms more chilling than *cancel culture*—a concept with which we’ve become all too familiar since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resultant shutdowns, and the battles over the freedoms of religion and speech that directly ensued.

“Cancel culture is a real thing,” Lee stated. “To me, it is just one small step away from it being a wholesale gospel issue.”

He explained: “We have seen this demonstrated, so this is not theory anymore. If they feel like your business or your message, or whatever your activity is, running on their machines, is causing any kind of ‘mental distress,’ or anything of that nature, they have the right then to just turn you off because it is a violation of terms. That is a very broad thing, because most things that are of a conservative message could fall under that category.”

So how are we as Christians to navigate this technological and cultural minefield?

“We’re making prayer a very big component in everything that we do,” Lee stressed.

“Not to make ourselves intentionally a target,” he said, “but we are in the sermon business. We have two-million-plus sermons on our site. If people are crying about offenses, pick a page in (the Bible)—there are things that will offend people.”

Throughout this series, we have addressed the exponential increase of online ministry activity over the last two-plus years—looking at its pluses, minuses—and pitfalls.

Perhaps the greatest threat in the latter category comes from outside—from *cancel culture*.

“We have churches already telling us that they are having trouble with their platforms,” Lee stated. “You are seeing sermons being pulled off. You are seeing entire ministries being pulled off.”

While The Vault will also strengthen SermonAudio in terms of cybersecurity, as discussed in a previous installment, the threat of cultural cancellation seems to be primary in most people’s minds.

Lee explained: “We are seeing this, more and more, here and there, of churches that are suffering this sort of censorship. I don’t see how this could be a surprise to us. To me it is obvious. If these companies are run by individuals that have a very sharp leaning bent toward progressive ideologies, then they are going to find ways to remove very offensive—to them personally—content. They are not going to stand for that.”

According to Lee, our window of opportunity is fleeting.

“I just see this as a matter of time,” he stated. “I don’t really see this as an *if*, but a *when*. If nothing else, it is prudent for us to take some steps to ensure that we retain our ability to communicate what may be offensive. When you start talking about sin, and the fact that there is only one way to heaven, and that other ways are false, you are going to offend people. There is no way around that.”

And the consequences of that kind of offense, in this toxic culture, could be frightening.

“Imagine a day when you don’t even have the technical platforms to get your message out,” Lee said. “I think that would be horribly paralyzing for the church, to not have a voice. We have never experienced that. When you lose platform, you are voiceless.”

The Apostle Paul exhorts us to “awake” and be among those that are “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:14, 16).

“This is partially the reason why we are doing The Vault,” said Lee. “This is just our way of preparing.”

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