

Announcer (00:00:03):

C13 Originals.

Andrew Jenks (00:00:06):

If you have any tips about Jerry Falwell Jr. or Liberty University, you can contact us at tips@gangstercapitalism.com. We can ensure anonymity.

Rioter 1 (00:00:20):

Jesus Christ, we've spoke your name. Amen.

Rioter 2 (00:00:24):

Amen. [crosstalk 00:00:24].

Rioter 1 (00:00:27):

Let's say a prayer. Let's all say a prayer. [inaudible 00:00:27] create space.

Rioter 3 (00:00:29):

Thank you heavenly father for gracing us with this opportunity. We stand up for our God-given [inaudible 00:00:35] rights.

Rioter 1 (00:00:36):

Amen.

Rioter 3 (00:00:36):

That you allow us to send a message

Rioter 4 (00:00:38):

Yes.

Rioter 3 (00:00:38):

... that we will not allow the American way of United States of America go down. Thank you for filling this temple with patriots that love you.

Rioter 4 (00:00:47):

Yes, Lord.

Rioter 3 (00:00:47):

... and that love Christ. We love you and we thank you. In Christ's holy name we pray...

Rioter 2 (00:00:50):

Amen. [crosstalk 00:00:51]

Rioter 3 (00:00:54):

[inaudible 00:00:54].

Andrew Jenks (00:00:57):

The prayer you just heard was spoken on the floor of the US Senate on January 6th by insurrectionists after breaching the Capitol building seeking to overturn the presidential election. [crosstalk 00:01:11]. Five people, including one police officer, died as a result of the riot. [crosstalk 00:01:29].

Kristin Du Mez (00:01:35):

The events of January 6 were shocking, but not surprising. That goes for the storming of the Capitol itself, and also for the role of American Christians and conservative Christians in that riot.

Andrew Jenks (00:01:54):

You've heard from Kristin Du Mez a few times this season. Du Mez is a history professor at Calvin University, and she's the author of *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*.

Kristin Du Mez (00:02:13):

The signs were everywhere. You had the Christian flag being carried through the halls of Congress. You had the proud boys kneeling in prayer before they headed off to storm Congress. This kind of militancy, this fighting for God, fighting for Christianity, fighting for Christian America, it's just so pervasive in conservative evangelical circles.

Braveheart (00:02:36):

That they may take our lives, but they'll never take our freedom. [crosstalk 00:02:42].

Kristin Du Mez (00:02:44):

I saw a sign in the crowds that was a bright yellow sign with Braveheart written on it. And there was an image of Donald Trump's face imposed on a William Wallace figure, and he had a sword in one hand and he had the severed head of Karl Marx in the other. That only makes sense if you know this tradition of conservative white evangelicals and how much they love the movie, Braveheart, and how much they pattern their own masculinity, their own conceptions of Christian manhood after Mel Gibson's, William Wallace in the movie, Braveheart. And so, yes. If you knew what signs to look for, you could see the influences of this conservative evangelical militancy very much present on January 6.

Andrew Jenks (00:03:41):

Du Mez began looking into masculinity and militarism in American evangelicalism more than 15 years ago. And in her research, she realized that the Vietnam war had become a pivotal moment.

Kristin Du Mez (00:03:57):

The Vietnam war was incredibly important in shaping evangelical identity because it seemed to them that because America couldn't win against what seemed like a

ragtag enemy, what is the problem? So, they identified some problems. Feminism. Feminism has made American men soft. Liberalism, the anti-war activists, they are not stepping up to defend faith, family, and nation like proper American men need to. And so, evangelicals in opposition to the antiwar movement, in opposition to feminists, perceived that they had this specially important role. They were going to make sure that their boys were not emasculated so that they could grow up to become strong men who could fight for their nation and do so effectively. And so, Vietnam becomes this critical moment where we see conservative evangelicals really uniting around the set of values and in this God and country patriotism with a kind of militant masculinity right at the heart of that.

Kristin Du Mez (00:05:21):

And then you've got... I mean, the whole posture of this "us versus them" mentality. This militancy really sets up, "Anybody who is not with us is against us." The other. Whether it's a person of color, the immigrant, the Muslim, anybody who is not inside the circle of white Christian America and within this kind of God and country militancy is a potential or very real enemy. And so, we need to guard against that. And what this ends up doing is really shaping the Christian faith itself because in the Bible, you have all kinds of verses that work against this militancy, that work against this "us versus them" mentality. You have teachings throughout the scriptures of welcoming the stranger, welcoming the foreigner into your midst, of working for the common good, loving your neighbors as yourselves, and of not pursuing violence, not the way of the sword. That was not the way of Jesus Christ, but these passages, these teachings end up just getting set aside. They are either utterly neglected or they're explained away or they're just outright rejected like Jesus says to turn the other cheek, no, you can't turn the other cheek and still protect your country.

Kristin Du Mez (00:06:47):

When I first started paying attention to evangelical politics, a narrative that I came across frequently was that evangelical militancy was a response to evangelical fear. The evangelicals were really afraid of, whether it be communism or secular humanism or radical Islam, or they were afraid of demographic changes, or they afraid of losing their religious liberties, and I think Jerry Falwell Sr. is a great example of how this fear and militancy go hand in hand. And in his church, Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, he really kind of pioneered this where it was a very militant faith that he preached. He built his congregation around this fear of the outsider, fear of the other. The idea that truth is found within these walls and do not stray. And if you are not with us, then you are against us. And that was a really effective way for him to build his church, to build loyalty among his followers.

Kristin Du Mez (00:08:01):

When evangelicals end up embracing this militant conception of Christian masculinity, there is a conflict with the Jesus that is revealed in the scriptures. And so, this presents somewhat of a problem. If you've embraced a militant conception of Christianity, you have to refashion Christ himself. And so, this is exactly what

they do. They end up really fighting against images of Christ that they claim are emasculated, effeminate images.

Kristin Du Mez (00:08:36):

Jerry Falwell Sr. was one of those who really pushed back against the effeminate pictures of Christ with long, flowing hair and this perfect complexion. And he says Christ is a He-Man and this is a theme that is just picked up over and over again trying to refashion Christ into the image of their warrior model. He's a warrior king riding on a horse, wielding a bloody sword, a guy who would be comfortable at an NRA rally. He's the ultimate fighter, ready to slay his enemies. He's got big muscles. He's not soft. He's the most macho, masculine Christ you can imagine, and that's the man that we are called to follow.

Andrew Jenks (00:09:29):

Du Mez says that when Donald Trump was running for president, evangelicals didn't know what to make of him, but he tapped into something that had been brewing for a long time.

Kristin Du Mez (00:09:42):

He was crass, he was cruel, and he played the role incredibly well. And that is the Donald Trump that evangelicals came to back. And it's really quite remarkable. The more belligerent he presented himself, the more evangelicals started to be drawn to him. So, he didn't look like what you would think when you think of a family values candidate for certain, however, he did embody this rugged masculinity that evangelicals had been touting for generations. So, people like Falwell Jr. will come out and say, "Look, we do not need a Sunday school teacher. What we need is a strong man who will fight for us. There is a tough side to Christianity and Donald Trump is going to represent that for us."

Andrew Jenks (00:10:50):

In his lifetime, Donald Trump has been awarded five honorary degrees by colleges and universities, two of which came from Liberty University. After the storming of the Capitol on January 6th, all of the schools rescinded those degrees except for Liberty. On January 12th, already months removed from his position as president of Liberty, Falwell Jr. told the media that if he could, he'd give another degree to Trump, but according to Kristin Du Mez, Falwell Jr. isn't speaking for evangelicals the way he did when he first endorsed Trump in 2016.

Kristin Du Mez (00:11:37):

Right now, there are many evangelicals who are deeply disturbed by what they have seen, deeply disturbed by the witness of their church, of their community, who did not believe the faith that they embrace was the same faith that has been embraced by and promoted by Donald Trump, by the militant figures at the forefront. Certainly not the faith that they saw represented in terms of the storming of the Capitol. And there is deep confusion and distress within many evangelical circles right now. And by deep, I mean, profoundly felt. There are many people who

are in crisis. There are some evangelical leaders right now who have been a part of this movement for decades who are now saying, “What have we done? What have I been a part of?”

Andrew Jenks (00:12:45):

From C13 Originals, a Cadence13 Studio, I’m Andrew Jenks. And this is Gangster Capitalism Season Three: Jerry Falwell Jr. and Liberty University. (singing).

FOX NEWS (00:13:35):

Well, the leader of Turning Point USA and the president of Liberty University announced the opening of their new Falkirk Center for faith and Liberty, which will operate on the schools at Lynchburg, Virginia campus.

News Anchor (00:13:49):

Charlie Kirk is the founder of Turning Point USA and Jerry Falwell Jr. is the president of Liberty University. Both men told One American News why they are opening the Falkirk Center for faith and liberty to bring the fight to the left and America’s culture war.

Jerry Falwell Jr (00:14:05):

Charlie came up with the concept of creating an institution, a think tank at Liberty University. Scott Lamb who works here came up with the name Falkirk and has... It’s a sort of a play on the Scottish battle for independence, but it’s also play on our two names, but really, Liberty University is being forced to do what the public schools have failed to do. And that’s teach American history the way it should be taught.

Dustin Wall (00:14:35):

The Falkirk Center, it’s a [inaudible 00:14:38] of Falwell and Charlie Kirk’s names.

Andrew Jenks (00:14:42):

This is Dustin Wall, the co-founder of Save71, an alumni organization calling for new leadership at Liberty University.

Dustin Wall (00:14:52):

The way that Scott Lamb, the communications director, who did the brand name for the Falkirk Center and came up with the original messaging. The way that he describes it is he was watching Braveheart, Falwell’s favorite movie, and there’s this battle of Falkirk. And so, it dawned on him that this battle of Falkirk was like the cultural battle that Christians need to have in the United States. And it also has both Falwell’s name in it and Charlie Kirk’s name in it, and so it’s perfect. And so, that’s why they named it the Falkirk Center.

Andrew Jenks (00:15:24):

Scott Lamb, the man who came up with the name for the Falkirk Center, co-wrote a book called The Faith of Donald Trump, a spiritual biography, which argued

that Trump was chosen by God to lead the country. According to his LinkedIn profile, Lamb was hired as Liberty's senior vice president of communications in May of 2019. Jerry Falwell Jr. and Charlie Kirk announced the establishment of the nonprofit Falkirk Center, which they called a think tank later that year.

Charlie Kirk (00:16:02):

This center will, first and foremost, proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ as articulated in the gospel and the intersection of the gospel with American freedoms and founding liberty. And far too often, Christians do not receive and hear that message, especially in churches and not the schools. And Christians must learn how to adequately defend and fight for these freedoms in this now very important cultural battle that we're in.

Jerry Falwell Jr. (00:16:28):

In public schools, the teacher's unions force American history to be taught as some sort of a sinister [inaudible 00:16:37] white man taking advantage of everybody else, and it's totally opposite of what happened.

Andrew Jenks (00:16:46):

Despite never finishing college himself, Kirk, 27 years old, gained popularity by visiting campuses across the country to spread his message to young conservatives.

Charlie Kirk (00:16:59):

I visit universities all across the country and I could tell you, young Christians, in particular, are unfortunately very confused about how to make choices in the civic arena, especially voting and politically, and to be able to partner with Jerry and Liberty University is so amazing because we're trying to explain the link between the gospel of Jesus Christ and American founding freedom.

Andrew Jenks (00:17:21):

The new Falkirk Center would be dedicated to "... renewing and defending Americas God-given freedoms and restoring Judeo-Christian principles in national policies, institutions, and culture, and it would be funded and owned by Liberty." The think tank's first group of fellows included Erika Frantzve, a former Liberty student and Miss Arizona, who is now Charlie Kirk's fiance. Jenna Ellis, President Trump's constitutional attorney who infamously tried to help overturn the 2020 presidential election. And Sebastian Gorka, one of Trump's early deputy assistants who was later banned from YouTube for spreading election misinformation. Here's Dustin wall again.

Dustin Wall (00:18:17):

They think that the world hates Christians and wants to destroy Christianity. And the only people standing in between liberals and secularists and people that are trying to destroy Christians and Christians is the Falkirk Center. The Falkirk Center is going to defend Christianity. It really does kind of see that role for itself. So, it

is most focused on these sort of culture war issues that evangelical conservatives have kind of made into big flashpoints in the culture, Christmas being canceled, and things like that, but effectively what the Falkirk is doing is it's just adding a lot of heat to discussions in kind of an irrelevant way. Most people understand that no one is trying to ban Christmas, but the focus that you get from the Falkirk Center when they talk about an issue like that is this kind of naive, irrelevant take.

Dustin Wall (00:19:16):

And so, you've got this center that is selling itself as a think tank and it's producing zero academic work. It's just a joke. If the online school is embarrassing to Liberty's best professors, the Falkirk Center is humiliating to Liberty's best professors.

Falkirk Podcast Host (00:19:36):

Hi and welcome to another episode of the Falkirk Center podcast. I am here with the founder of Turning Point USA and the co-founder of the Falkirk Center for Faith and Liberty right here at Liberty University, Charlie Kirk. I'm looking right now, Charlie, at the sad state of affairs in this country. It's truly scary as we watch what's happening in the news.

Charlie Kirk (00:20:00):

I mean, it's pathological. It really is. And so, you have in Seattle, a armed militia that has taken over six or seven city blocks. They say this is a police free zone. They storm the city hall. How is that not an act of insurrection? That is the definition of insurrection.

Andrew Jenks (00:20:18):

Charlie Kirk speaking here on the Falkirk Center podcast in June of 2020 about the definition of insurrection, tweeted two days before the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol that he was honored to help send 80 plus buses "... full of patriots to DC to fight for this president." Kirk later deleted the tweet and said only seven buses ended up going. Here's Constance Schneider, a 2021 Liberty graduate, and the first female to be elected student body president in the school's history.

Constance Schneider (00:20:58):

As a student here at Liberty, we have been taught how to differentiate between religion and faith, and how to differentiate between Christian nationalism and Christianity. And we're continually taught to [inaudible 00:21:10] those things out and understand what it is and see it for what it is. But also at the same time, there are things like the Falkirk Center that their rhetoric had been very similar to the rhetoric of those who are taking part in the riot. It was just eerie to see the similarities. It's like, "Isn't this contrary to what we're being taught?" There's a lot of cognitive dissonance because I believe there's two different liberties. There's a Liberty that students know and love. That's marked by faith and values and love, and it's the culture shaped by the dedicated students, faculty, and staff.

Constance Schneider (00:21:44):

Then there's a second liberty that I think in the past few years during Falwell's presidency was marked by poor leadership, negative media, and just a lot of politics. And this is being promoted and endorsed by some leaders on our campus, and it's not what we're being taught in the classroom. One thing that we're taught is politics should never supersede your faith as a Christian. We are Christian before we're Republican, we're Christian before we're liberal, we're Christian before anything else, before I'm a woman, I'm a student, I'm gen Z. I'm a Christian before any of that. But I think it comes down to what God you worship. And some people worship the God of Jerry Falwell or the God of Trump. And it's, obviously, they don't worship the same God as I do.

Andrew Jenks (00:22:25):

A Falkirk "influencer" named Will Witt posted that America needs Christian values. This, after a video emerged of him sitting on a water fountain and holding a girl's face in his lap while he looks at the camera and says, "Yo, rape is hilarious."

Will Witt (00:22:48):

Yo, rape is hilarious.

Andrew Jenks (00:22:52):

Here's Addyson Garner, a 2019 Liberty graduate and former senior class president.

Addyson Garner (00:23:01):

If you show me a man that demeaned or talk down to me about student government, I'll show you a man that now has a prominent place in the Falkirk Center. It's so funny to kind of watch all those people come together in pursuit of such terrible goals. For me, they're a demon quality of the Falkirk Center is that it seems like such a parody. Any issue that you could potentially have with Christian nationalism or far right Christian politics, it's there, it's on the website. Find it. I really liked when they released their "About" section or statement or something like that at the beginning where they said, "Jesus taught people to turn the other cheek, but we say..." and it's just so to see them being so open about the fact that they don't give a flip what Jesus thought.

Addyson Garner (00:23:51):

So, I'm glad that it's being executed so poorly because it takes any credibility they might have had away. On the other side, of course, it's so frustrating to see this tax-exempt organization pushing these blatantly, political, party-aligned ideas, and it's embarrassing to the church, but I do think that it has spurred some people to say like, "Oh yeah. I think there is a problem here." And it's surprising that Liberty hasn't gotten in more trouble about their tax-exempt status.

Andrew Jenks (00:24:30):

Liberty's 501(c)(3) status prevents it from engaging in politics, but in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election, Politico reported that Falkirk bought at least \$50,000 worth of Facebook ads for Donald Trump and other Republican

candidates, which were designated as political ads. These ads, including one showing Trump in prayer with the caption, “Pray for our president” would appear to violate the nonprofit rules Liberty is bound by. Here’s Constance Schneider.

Constance Schneider (00:25:08):

Our mindset behind it was like, if we’re a Christian school and faith is our mission, and our goal is to train champions for Christ, that’s our mission statement, then why are we putting politics and political partisanship time and time again before our Christian values? And why are we masking political partisanship as Christian values? Why are we saying like, “If you’re not this type of conservative then you’re not a Christian”? Why is that center saying things like that? Why are they using the gospel and using the Christian values that we believe in... Why are they abusing that and twisting it and making it seem like, if you don’t believe exactly what they believe in, then you’re not a good Christian? That’s just manipulation and spiritual manipulation at its finest.

Andrew Jenks (00:25:49):

Addyson Garner says that Liberty’s convocation, its twice weekly mandatory meeting of thousands of students, had become the source of what she calls “spiritual gaslighting”.

Addyson Garner (00:26:02):

The first time that I felt that something might be off about Liberty was in combo. We had so many political combos and it was frustrating as a student who was trying to deconstruct my faith that was built around Christian nationalism because I felt that leadership was presenting these political ideas on the same platform that they presented religious ideas, and they were trying to conflate the two. So, for me, just that first semester where I lived on campus and had to go to combo and just had this constant barrage of Christian nationalism, that’s when it felt off to me. Ideas like Christian nationalism, loyalty to the Republican party, things like that would be presented as the correct thing to do for a Christian. And those who decided that that wasn’t their path, those weren’t their views, they were painted as being less Christian, less right with God, not following Jesus.

Addyson Garner (00:26:58):

And so, that’s why I use the phrase “spiritual gaslighting” because they’re weaponizing scripture or they’re weaponizing the church or church leaders to make people feel like they’re not Christian if they are not Republican. Having that shoved down students’ throats and preaches the only right kind of Christianity, pushed me so far away from that. And I know it happened to so many of my friends too. I don’t like going to churches that have American flags in their sanctuary. And part of that is because of the blatant Christian nationalism of Liberty. And so, I think that in their pursuit to radicalize conservative students, they just ended up pushing so many students away from it entirely. It’s truly shown me all the issues with that kind of thinking and that fundamentally changed my faith as a result of going to Liberty.

Andrew Jenks (00:27:55):

We asked Jerry Falwell Jr. if he feels that Liberty has strayed at all from its core mission of building champions for Christ. Becki's response was, "Absolutely not!" Last December, a petition was started by a Liberty freshman to close the Falkirk Center. It stated that Falkirk meant to, "Wage war against decency, respect and Christian charity all while misrepresenting Liberty students and the Christian Church." And the quote, "We want to be known as people who are given an education to not only enter our desired fields, but also to live as people chosen by the father united to the son, and regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Not as people who were educated to become champions for Trump and Western civilization in the cultural battlefield."

Andrew Jenks (00:29:02):

According to the New York Times, Liberty quietly decided not to renew Charlie Kirk's contract last fall. We asked Jerry what his thoughts were on ties being cut between Liberty and Kirk. Becki Falwell told us, "Jerry has no knowledge of this," which of course is hard to believe. This past March, the Falkirk Center even began a rebranding, announcing a name change. It's now known as the Standing for Freedom Center. Liberty school newspaper said that the center would have a reaffirmed focus on its original mission and purpose. It gave critics of Falkirk a reason for optimism if only for a moment.

Andrew Jenks (00:29:50):

Following the announcement, new fellows were appointed. Mike Pompeo, Trump's former secretary of state and Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas and the father of Trump's former press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Here, an excerpt of a podcast from May 10th, entitled Staring Down the BLM Mob With the Gospel.

Falkirk Podcast Host (00:30:16):

BLM movement is an organization of radical Marxists that are not targeting violent oppressors and the strong among us, they are targeting the elderly, the women and children who are most vulnerable and susceptible to violence. They want to destroy the traditional family, destroy the market economy, promote woke capital and usher in an era of totalitarian Marxism in this country.

Andrew Jenks (00:30:47):

Just last month, the Standing for Freedom Center posted an image of JFK to their Facebook page with an anti-immigration quote attributed to him, super-imposed beside his photo. There was only one problem. It was the wrong Kennedy. The quote was actually said by Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana in 2019. One of the most far right members of Congress. Maybe not much has changed after all. [crosstalk 00:31:33].

Andrew Jenks (00:31:39):

The cheering you hear is from an Instagram post on March 13th from Jerry Falwell

Jr.'s feed. He and Becki are taking in a Liberty men's lacrosse game on campus. This was six months after Jerry had left the school in disgrace. The appearance at the game made some people think that maybe Liberty hadn't truly cut ties with Falwell. Maybe he was coming back. Following, Politico printed an article in which Falwell said that he had definite plans to be more of a presence on campus saying, "The employees and the board have been nothing but supportive, 100%." As a result of the Politico article, Jerry Prevo, Liberty's current president and longtime Falwell friend sent a letter to employees instructing them to avoid all contact with both Jerry and Becki Falwell. Then in mid-April, Liberty filed its \$10 million lawsuit against Falwell Jr. seemingly putting to rest any idea of him coming back. But then two weeks later, this.

Jerry Falwell Jr. (00:33:05):

Our seniors, our farm, May 8th we're going to have the real Liberty graduation.

Andrew Jenks (00:33:11):

If you couldn't quite make that out, that was the voice of Jerry Falwell Jr. at a student comedy show off campus, holding the microphone and inviting all of the seniors to the Falwell family farm for the "... real Liberty graduation." The woman taking the video gasps and says, "Let's go." It's a short video, so we'll play it again.

Jerry Falwell Jr. (00:33:39):

Our seniors, our farm, May 8th we're going to have the real Liberty graduation.

Andrew Jenks (00:33:46):

Falwell canceled the party at his house citing health issues, but his appearance and announcement made national news. Not only was he popping up again, this time engaging with Liberty students just weeks after being sued by the school, but he was inviting students to a party at the same farm where Becki had allegedly initiated sexual contact with a Liberty student back in 2008. Here's 2021 Liberty graduate and former student body president, Constance Schneider.

Constance Schneider (00:34:22):

I don't even know why Jerry showed up. I don't think he was invited, but a lot of students were really disturbed about that. And he came up and invited everyone to a graduation party at his house. And I remember just like... I almost actually went to that comedy night because it was my friend that was performing. I'm glad I didn't. People were like, "I don't know why he showed up. It was creepy. It was weird that he came on stage and it was just like, 'He's not okay. There's something up with him.'" And there were rumors that he was drunk and it's just like, "Man, I wish he would really just kind of leave us be and leave us alone. Let go of Liberty." He's being sued by his school. He's not allowed back on campus. Not really allowed to talk to us. Students don't really like him anymore. We're all kind of creeped out by him, honestly, even Becki. I wish he would move on and seek reconciliation with those that he's wronged, but I just want him to be better because he just doesn't seem like he's doing very well right now.

Andrew Jenks (00:35:16):

Jerry's appearance at the lacrosse game and the comedy show underscored just how difficult it is for the school his father founded to disentangle itself from the Falwell name. We asked Jerry two simple questions to try to get a sense of his thinking on the matter. The first, what are your thoughts on your departure from the school? Becki responding on Jerry's behalf said, "Jerry's health has not been good since last August. He developed clots in his lungs and until his health improves, it is best that he not be CEO of LU." The second question was more direct. Do you see yourself ever coming back to a position of leadership at Liberty. Becki, again responding on Jerry's behalf wrote one word, "Undecided." Here's Karen Swallow Prior, an author and English professor at Liberty for over 20 years who resigned in July of 2020.

Karen Swallow Prior (00:36:29):

Would I be surprised if Jerry Jr. comes back in some capacity in the future? No, not at all because this is the broken pattern of Christian institutions is this form that includes some sort of repentance and reconciliation, whether it's actually happened or not. And then the return of the prodigal son to his place because we keep reenacting the form of that story over and over whether the content is there or not. And I really hope and pray actually that Jerry and Becki will have true repentance. But true repentance doesn't mean restoration of positions of earthly power and authority that you had before. When those things are abused, then you should not get them back. Not because you haven't been forgiven and repentance isn't true, but because you have lost the trust that's required to pull that kind of authority.

Andrew Jenks (00:37:31):

But Jerry Falwell Jr. has displayed nothing, even close to remorse for anything. In fact, we asked him if he had any regrets about his time as president of Liberty. Becki responding for Jerry said, "Jerry has no regrets, except that he allowed devious employees like Ron Godwin and Neal Askew to remain employed longer than he should have." Godwin, was a former and long time provost and Askew was a former executive vice-president at Liberty.

Andrew Jenks (00:38:08):

In a follow-up, we asked what he would have done differently if he did have any regrets. Becki's written response referring to Godwin and Askew was, "He would have fired them on day one." Neither Godwin or Askew responded to requests for comment. We also asked Jerry if he has any comment on Liberty's current president, longtime friend, and Falwell apologist, Jerry Prevo. Becki's response, "Jerry has had a good relationship with Jerry Prevo in recent months, but now has reasons to doubt his integrity." Here's Julie Roys, a Christian investigative journalist and the host of the podcast, The Roys Report.

Julie Roys (00:39:00):

Jerry Prevo was chairman of the board while Jerry was doing all this stuff. Are we to believe he was that stupid? That checked out? And if he was that checked out,

then he's incompetent. So, he's either incompetent or he's complicit, one or the other, but look into Jerry Prevo. Do a little research on this man.

Andrew Jenks (00:39:19):

Jerry Prevo is the former pastor at Anchorage Baptist Temple in Alaska. While at his former church, Prevo got in trouble for violating Alaska tax law After claiming tax exempt status on multiple homes owned by the church. Anchorage Baptist was forced to pay back taxes on the properties, but Prevo then used his ties to the Alaska GOP to push through unpopular amendments to tax laws that would allow his church to regain exemption on those homes. Just a couple years later, Prevo was in the news again during the divorce proceedings of his son, Allen. Allen Prevo was provided with a housing allowance to live in a home owned by his father's church. However, that housing allowance was used to build Allen's equity in the home. To put it simply, the church was paying Jerry Prevo's son to buy the home from the church. The church was again forced to pay back taxes, but managed to avoid tax fraud charges under the claim that they misinterpreted the law.

Julie Roys (00:40:44):

This is a man who clearly doesn't have a problem with self-dealing. So, they have a problem with Jerry Falwell Jr. engaging in self-dealing and who do they put in as an interim president? Jerry Prevo who's very accomplished at self-dealing. It appears. I mean, it's shocking. So, now we're supposed to trust that these trustees who have been complicit with what's gone on with Jerry Falwell Jr. are going to commission an independent investigation to get to the bottom of it. It's the fox watching the henhouse. And the amount of confidence that you see in Jerry makes you wonder what kind of leverage he has on that board and why he has it. I would hope that an investigation would get to the bottom of it, but the investigation really isn't investigating the board and the board needs to be investigated every bit as much as Jerry.

Andrew Jenks (00:41:39):

Remember, last September, Liberty began an audit and investigation into Jerry Falwell Jr.'s financial dealings at the school during his tenure. Many are upset that it isn't going further and looking into Liberty's Title IX violations, but more so, people are skeptical because although a reputable firm was hired to handle the investigation, it is the Liberty board who hired them. Jerry Prevo was the chairman of Liberty's board of trustees until he took over as president after Falwell's ouster. He's still one of seven members of the LU board's powerful executive committee.

Andrew Jenks (00:42:29):

A man named Harvey Gainey is the current chairman of the executive committee. He took over that position after Mark DeMoss was pushed out for expressing his concerns about Falwell Jr.'s endorsement of Trump. Gainey is a long time Falwell friend and has a questionable business track record of his own. He used to operate a Michigan trucking company called Gainey Corporation. In 2008, his company declared bankruptcy after being sued by its lender for more than \$200 million in

debt. Filings in the suit claim that Gainey illegally enriched his family by pulling out over \$10 million while the company was approaching financial collapse. The filings also showed that Gainey submitted two apparently different sets of personal financial records. One showing a deficit net worth of \$5.5 million and another showing a positive net worth of \$5.7 million. Gainey Corporation was eventually sold at a bankruptcy auction.

Andrew Jenks (00:43:47):

Harvey Gainey and Jerry Prevo have been close with the Falwells for decades. And they are currently the two most powerful people at Liberty, but there are other questionable board members on the seven-member executive committee at Liberty too. Jerry Vines, a close friend of Jerry Falwell Sr.'s mentored a pastor who had 20 years worth of allegations of extra-marital sex with his parishioners, including rapes of underage girls. According to an investigation by the Houston Chronicle, one barely 18 years old says she went to Jerry Vines to tell him about her rape. She says that Vines told her that it would be "Embarrassing for her to discuss publicly," and I quote, "These things have a way of blowing over." Vines did nothing. The pastor went on to assault others, even impregnating one. In Vines' autobiography, he wrote about the high school senior's rape saying, "I didn't understand it to go beyond some flirtation. They were both single at the time, perhaps I was wrong." The pastor was not single. He was a married, 29 year old at the time.

Andrew Jenks (00:45:17):

Tim Lee who replaced the only person of color on Liberty's executive committee and is also chairman of the board tweeted on January 3rd that in 1776, our forefathers "... pledged their lives and laid everything on the line." Along with the #webetterfight. In a January 7th Facebook post, just one day after the insurrection, Lee posted, "99.5% of those protesting the election yesterday were peaceful." Carroll Hudson, another EC member in the wake of a cascade of bad press about Falwell Jr. in 2019 said, "He's the best thing that ever happened at Liberty. If you look at the gains we've had, why would you have any concerns?" And one more interesting fact. The very story you heard this season, the one about Jerry and Becki's behavior at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis...

Corilynn (00:46:24):

... and I see Jerry go head first into the boobs.

Andrew Jenks (00:46:29):

Well, board member, Steven Snyder, was there too. Here's Julie Roys again.

Julie Roys (00:46:39):

If I trusted the board, I might trust the investigation. I don't trust the board at all. I don't trust any of it. I think what will get reported will be what's in the trustee's best interests to get reported. I don't know all the skeletons in that closet, but I bet a lot of those trustees do.

Andrew Jenks (00:46:59):

Of course, Liberty has also sued Jerry Falwell Jr. for failure to disclose sensitive information about the Giancarlo Granda relationship while negotiating his new contract in 2019. One in which his pay went from \$1.16 million a year to \$2.2 million a year, which placed him among the top 20 highest paid college presidents in the country. But it was also reported that Liberty's seven-member executive committee controlled by Prevo, Gainey, Vines, and Hudson failed to inform the rest of the board of trustees about their lawsuit against Falwell Jr. and the cycle of hypocrisy continues. Here's Dustin Wall again.

Dustin Wall (00:47:52):

Falwell is gone, but the leaders on the board of trustees who enabled him for years are still there. We know that they were Falwell's biggest fans and defenders and they haven't owned up to anything that's gone on in the last four years. Much of the culture that he was responsible for is still in place. And so, we think that Liberty needs to clean house if it has a chance of becoming a reputable Christian school.

Andrew Jenks (00:48:22):

Constance Schneider made it clear to us that she loves Liberty, as have the overwhelming number of people we've spoken with. But she says that Liberty's lawsuit against Falwell Jr. doesn't address the deeper problem.

Constance Schneider (00:48:38):

It could be perceived and interpreted as steps of accountability or it could be perceived and interpreted as trying to look good to the rest of the world. Like, "Here's a lawsuit. This is our accountability." Instead of the accountability that we want, which is institutional, we want to see more accountability within the board members. We want to see the board members that allowed him to make all these crazy decisions and allowed him to be the kind of president he was to be held accountable. I, personally, felt it was for show that, "Is this really going to do anything?" I think it's just because we've seen time and time again the responses we've gotten from the board when people reach out and they say, "Hey, what's going on with this? What's going on with that?" They're always responses that just seem very out of touch with what actually should be done and seem out of touch with the conversations that students are having about these issues. The board members and leadership had been at this school for decades and nothing has changed when it comes to the culture at our school, the leadership culture.

Constance Schneider (00:49:35):

I guess they think that we're buying whatever they're putting out, whatever they're selling, but a lot of students aren't. But also at the same time, what are we going to do about it? That's the next question. It's like, when you know your school is a great place and you love your school dearly, what do you do about it? How do you respond?

Andrew Jenks (00:49:57):

And yet another sign that Liberty has yet to truly part ways with Jerry Falwell Jr., amazingly, he's still listed as a principal of the Liberty University Endowment Trust on filing submitted to the state in June of this year, nearly two months after LU filed suit against him. Michael Poliakoff is the president of the American Council of Trustees and alumni, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting accountability at America's colleges and universities.

Michael Poliakoff (00:50:35):

It's generally true, no pun intended, that Liberty is more often lost by degrees. And when a board winks things that as a fiduciary body it should never wink at, then it becomes much easier the second and the third time to do things of even greater magnitude. A board needs to be asking hard questions. And the reports that we got of the board never daring to ask questions certainly suggest a real abandonment of duty. Where was the board? No questions were being asked. Why did they fall in line and not say, "Stop." The president reports to the board. And if the board is feeling so tamed or so cowed that it won't even ask questions, then something has very seriously gone off the rails.

Michael Poliakoff (00:51:41):

The beauty of an independent governing board is that it should listen to every constituency, but be beholden to none. And it should serve as the great wet blanket committee for the president. It should be able to say, "Stop and reconsider. We're not with you on this." And when that doesn't happen, it is a grave sign of danger.

Andrew Jenks (00:52:13):

Michael Poliakoff also had a message for Liberty's board about the investigation into Falwell Jr.'s dealings at the school.

Michael Poliakoff (00:52:22):

An investigation needs to be above suspicion. That's the guiding light in recovering from the kind of issue that Liberty has had. And so, it behooves the board to latch onto those time-honored principles of sunshine and transparency and independent investigation and open reporting. That's the only way forward. The extent to which a board is trying to control an investigation is the extent to which suspicion will grow. And right now, Liberty does not need to in any way perpetuate that suspicion. It needs a new birth, and that requires candor. It requires some element of bravery as well. And these are people whose souls are committed to such virtues. They need to act upon them.

Andrew Jenks (00:53:35):

Should we expect those on Liberty's board to be brave, to have candor or should Liberty clean house? It's not easy to replace members of the board of trustees at a nonprofit, but Jerry Falwell Sr. may have envisioned a house cleaning at some point. In 2004, just three years before his passing, Falwell Sr. amended Liberty's articles of incorporation. He put the power to remove Liberty board members into the hands of the board of directors of his church, Thomas Road Baptist. Jonathan

Falwell, Thomas Road's pastor, and Liberty's newly named campus pastor and Jerry Jr.'s younger brother called this the nuclear option. In the Falwell biography, Falwell Inc., he said, "Dad set it up so the church forever will be the rotor that guides the university. He said that if Liberty ever turns to the left, members of the board should fire everyone and shut the place down. The nuclear option exists. They will use it if they have to."

Andrew Jenks (00:54:55):

But here's where it gets even trickier. Jerry Falwell Jr. and Jonathan Falwell sat on the boards of both Liberty University and Thomas Road Baptist Church. So, essentially, some of the authority to fire Jerry Jr. rested in the hands of Jerry Jr. and his brother. We asked Jerry Jr. if he still sat on the board of Thomas Road, Becki responded to us that Jerry was never a member of the governing board of TRBC. This is demonstrably false and we aren't sure why she'd say this when the documentation is so available. Nonetheless, as of this past year, Jerry Falwell Jr. is no longer on the TRBC board nor, of course, the Liberty board. But Jonathan Falwell is. He's still a board member of both Liberty and Thomas Road Baptist Church. And he was recently brought back to Liberty as the campus pastor and maybe more. Here's former Liberty Dean, Mark Tinsley.

Mark Tinsley (00:56:17):

The rumor on the street... And that you take it for what it's worth, but the rumor on the street right now from people I know on the inside is that the next chancellor of Liberty University is going to be Jonathan Falwell. So, if that happens, then we've done nothing to correct the ship. I'm not saying Jonathan's a bad guy at all, but the Falwell name needs to be dissociated from Liberty University. Think of the reputation that that name has when it's associated with that university now. What do you think putting another Falwell in charge is going to do for the reputation of the university? Nothing. It's just going to look like more family business. If that board were smart, it would look to dissociate itself from the Falwell name, hire a upstanding man or woman who has experience in Christian higher education, who has high integrity to come in there and clean that place up.

Andrew Jenks (00:57:16):

Jerry and Becki's son, Trey Falwell was recently let go from his vice president position at Liberty, but it seems his wife, Sarah, and his sister-in-law, Laura Falwell, still have their jobs. We called Scott Lamb, Liberty senior vice president of communications to ask if they were still employed by Liberty, and he hung up the phone on us. But Laura Wallace, Liberty's executive vice president of human resources and Jerry Falwell Jr.'s first cousin still has her job. And, of course, Jonathan Falwell has been brought in to a position of prominence at the school and the board who enabled Jerry Jr.'s behavior for all those years is still there. A board that Jonathan Falwell has sat on for years. Jerry Falwell Sr. often said that if Liberty University ever strayed too far from its original mission after he was gone, they should come and burn it all down. We found video of him saying it right there on Liberty's website.

Jerry Falwell Sr. (00:58:33):

We are an academic institution. We do want to teach our young people to be articulate leaders and communicators, polished chefs for the Lord academically, but more than that, we want them to have that spiritual dimension, champions for Christ. And today I want to call on the faculty, the staff, the administrators, and particularly, our students. I want to call on myself that we might rededicate ourselves to the vision that long after we've gone to heaven, maybe 50 years from now, someone may be watching this video and hear us say that we'd rather the property be burned to the ground and vacated and that it should ever cease to be God's university.

Andrew Jenks (00:59:30):

In a video from this past November, posted to the Standing for Freedom Center's Twitter feed, formerly the Falkirk Center, Jonathan Falwell referenced his father's words directly.

Jonathan Falwell (00:59:42):

I've heard in the last couple of weeks, in the last couple of months, individuals that have shared with me that they're concerned that Liberty is going to go the wrong direction. That Liberty is going to turn left and it's going to become liberal, and it's going to become an institution that kind of falls into the politically correct realm. Well, listen, when you heard my dad say that if a year from now or 10 years from now or 50 years from now, if someone comes along, and hearing my dad speak, and they look at Liberty University and it's gone off the rails and it's gone left and it's gone liberal and it's gone wild and it's walked away from the inerrancy of scripture and it's walked away from the gospel and it's walked away from its original mission and vision, you heard what my dad said. He said this, "Burn the place down." And I'm here to tell you tonight that if Liberty ever goes that direction, I'll be the one to light the match.

Andrew Jenks (01:00:33):

Jonathan is now in a position of immense power at Liberty. He's sitting in the same room as all of the others who've sat idly by as his brother chipped away at what their father built back in 1971. Jonathan says he's ready to light the match. Maybe he'll decide to be the light and make some positive changes to begin to bring Liberty out of the darkness or maybe it's too late. Maybe the match has already been lit.

Andrew Jenks (01:01:12):

Thanks so much to those of you who've reached out to us with tips this season at tips@gangstercapitalism.com. The response has been overwhelming and a very special thank you to the nearly 100 courageous people who've spoken to us, both on the record and off. Finally, if you like the show, please be sure to rate and review it. Thank you for listening to season three of gangster capitalism. This has been a creation and presentation of C13 originals, a Cadence13 Studio. Executive produced by Chris Corcoran, Zak Levitt, and myself. Written, produced and directed by Zak

Levitt. Produced by Perry Crowell and myself. Research and production support by Ian Mandt. Editing by Perry Crowell and Bill Schultz. Mixed and mastered by Bill Schultz. Production coordination by Terence Malangone. Studio coordination by Sean Cherry. Our work in design by Curt Courtenay. Marketing by Brian Swarth, Josefina Francis and Melissa [inaudible 01:02:25]. And PR by Hillary Schupf. Original music by Joel Goodman. And our theme song, Your Sins Will Find You Out, is by Eli Paperboy Reed

Eli Paperboy Reed (01:02:36):
(singing)

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