

Faith, Family, and Freedom - the Cultural Mandate

“The Turning Point”

1 Corinthians 16:9

There are a lot of people gathering in Arizona today for the memorial for Charlie Kirk, but we don't worship a person, we worship the Lord. We worship the *Lord of Charlie Kirk*, who literally was willing to lay down his life for Jesus. He laid down his life for the voice of *us* to share what's on our hearts and to share what's on the heart of God to the world with boldness and courage. Today we honor him. We honor his wife Erika, their family, their ministry, and we honor the Lord God who Charlie Kirk lifted up every day of his life.

Right before he laid down his life, Charlie sent a message to his mentor from 1 Corinthians 16:9 - *“A wide door for effective work has opened up for me and there are many adversaries.”* A wide door - that's *opportunities* - opportunities to stand up, to speak out, and to speak the Truth - to speak the truth *“in love”* - to speak the truth *because of love*, as Pastor Jimmy says. And, as we arise and speak and step into those open doors, there are also many adversaries - there are human beings who make choices with their free will.

But, ultimately, our true enemy is not human flesh and blood. According to the Bible in Ephesians 6:12, our true enemy is the spiritual forces of wickedness and this present darkness. We're in a spiritual battle. Every day, we wake up in a spiritual battle. There's a spiritual *war*, but at the same time, we praise God “who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yes, there are many adversaries, many battles, and many things to overcome, but God gives us the victory. God opens the doors. He opens the doors for us to speak his Word, and to share his love through our hearts and through our words. That's ultimately when we win the battle, when the Lord's name is exalted with love that never fails.

Today we want to take a moment to honor one who's going on ahead of us. Hebrews chapter 11 is called “the hall of faith” and Hebrews chapter 12 speaks of all those who have gone before us and laid down their lives for the love of God. It says, *“Now we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,”* and today Charlie Kirk is among that “great cloud of witnesses” cheering us on as God opens doors for us, and as we overcome the adversaries that come against us, against our families, our lives, and our nation - those things in the world that will try to stop the move of God. We overcome by the victory of the Lamb, by the power of the blood of Jesus, by the word of our testimony, and by those who love not their own lives but are obedient to Christ, even to death.

We've been talking recently about faith, family, and freedom, and we want to bring an exclamation point to that message this morning. This is the exclamation point - the word "turning-point." We're hearing that everywhere. "Turning point." As I waited on the Lord in my morning prayer time this week, I heard "turning point" in my heart. Of course I thought of Charlie Kirk, and the name of his ministry, Turning Point. What does that mean? What was Charlie Kirk trying to say? He was trying to say *there is a turning point* - from where we *are* to what we are *to be* - a turning point from what we are in our own personal journey with God.

We're all sinners, and we all need a Savior. We all have brokenness and woundedness. We all need hope and encouragement in a broken, fallen world - we all need a *turning point*. The turning point comes when we turn *away* from who we *were* and we turn *to God*. We turn away from our sins and we turn to the Sinless One. We turn away from our hurts and our wounds and our pain and our past and we turn to the One who heals us and frees us and fills us with his very Spirit. That's a turning point in a nation - from where we've been in the pressure of our culture that tries to silence the voice of those with a biblical worldview and of those who want to speak the name of Jesus wherever they are.

There comes a turning point when we say "*No, I will not be held back. Yes, I will stand up. I will speak the name of Jesus. I will declare the truth of God's Word. I will speak the truth in love.*" That's a turning point. Praise God for the turning-points in our lives. Psalm 107:6 says, "*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.*" Now, *that's* a turning point. Throughout Psalm 107, there are four different situations where people find themselves - in misery, in darkness, in gloom, and in the battles and struggles of natural forces and even in the consequences of their own choices.

Four different times it says that the people found themselves in distress - "*then they cried out to the Lord and he heard and he answered and he delivered them*" - he rescued them from their *distress*. That's a turning point - four different situations, four different battles, and four different struggles throughout that psalm. And every time, the turning point came when they cried out to the Lord. And *that's* the turning point of America.

We were going down a deep, dark path, and it was getting darker and darker and darker. And the voices that are *not* biblical voices, voices that *don't* declare the name of Jesus and *don't* honor things like life, honor, and clarity of a man and a woman - voices that teach our children woke things to confuse their minds and to set them up for destruction - *those* were the voices that were prevailing not so long ago.

And yet “My people who are called by my name” humbled themselves in the sight of the Lord. The faith of God rose up in their hearts. The Lord heard the prayers of a nation who humbled themselves in prayer, who turned from their wicked ways, who turned to the Lord and called on his name. And the Lord heard, and the Lord answered, and the Lord began to move, and he’s moving in this nation right now. There has been a turning point. It’s just begun. The turning point is not just a one-time moment. It’s not just a one-time prayer. It’s really a heart that’s surrendered and yielded to God - a heart that trusts God in faith and that trusts God with their families.

We need to trust God for the freedom of the Lord to stir in our hearts and release freedom in the land, to be free again to declare the mighty name of Jesus, to speak the biblical values of Truth - *in love* - *because of love*. But we are free, and “where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Wherever we see freedom, we can see the Spirit of the Lord moving. He’s moving in this church, moving in our hearts, and moving in our city.

Many of us have come here because of revival. Revival is *happening*. Revival is *moving*, and there is a great awakening that’s happening in our land, in our hearts, and throughout the earth. It’s a great awakening. God is waking us up. It’s a turning point. There’s a *shifting* in the spiritual atmosphere. It’s happening and we are participating. And now is not the time to sit back. Now is not the time to just wait for the next event to come. Now *is* the time to come alive. Now is the time to, as the Bible says, “*arise and shine, for your light has come. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*” (Isaiah chapter 60)

We thank the Lord and pray for a turning point as we turn to the Lord, cry out to the Lord, and humble ourselves so he can lift us up. A turning and a shifting is happening as we say, “*Oh Lord, don’t leave us out. Don’t leave us out, Lord. We want to be in the middle of that. Whatever that looks like, whatever you’re calling us to, we want to be in the middle of that.*” I got to be with Brian and the team there at the middle school Wednesday morning. How exciting to see these young people coming to hear the word of the Lord, coming to let God set a fire in their hearts.

There’s a great move of the young people in our nation right now. Before the assassination of Charlie Kirk, there were maybe 2,000 or so chapters of Turning Point USA. And now there’s over 5,400 applications to be part of that move. Hasn’t God done something that’s like the seed that, while it was still a seed, could only produce a little but then the seed, like a kernel of wheat, went into the ground and died - *then the harvest came*.

There's a harvest of souls coming. There's a harvest of righteousness coming. There's a harvest of a people who won't sit back, won't shut up, but they *will* be alive. They will declare the Faith. They will declare the hope that comes only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes - (exclamation point!). After the word "turning-point" came to my spirit the other day waiting on the Lord in prayer, the first words that came to my heart were "Valley Forge." Also with that, the Lord brought to my mind the picture of General George Washington at Valley Forge, like the famous painting - where he's there on his knees and there's the horse and the snow's coming down.

That winter at Valley Forge, there had been many, many defeats. The enemy, *our* enemy, was winning the war. People were discouraged. They were broken and dis-unified. So many of the soldiers were leaving in discouragement and hopelessness and despair. And in that winter at Valley Forge, General Washington was trying to raise up the men, prepare the men, equip the men, bring unity, and to restore something in their spirit. Something in their spirit had to be restored and something had to change. There had to be a turning point.

And there in that picture of George worshipping on his knees in prayer - what a picture of Psalm 107. *"They cried out to the Lord in their distress."* They cried out to the Lord in their day of trouble. They cried out to the Lord that something must turn - something must *change*. *"Oh God, help me."* And the Lord heard, and the Lord answered and he lifted him up. And then, after that prayer, they're in that boat going across the Delaware River. We've seen that famous painting, too. There was General George Washington in the front of that boat crossing the Delaware for the surprise attack that was soon to come.

And they went across and there was a victory. There had not been victory for the Americans in a long time, but victory came that day - there was a *shifting*. There was a *turning* in the hearts and the morale of the men. They say the actual battle that happened on the other side of the Delaware River was a draw tactically and militarily, but it was *not* a draw in the spirit. It was a victory in the spirit - there was a turning point and a shifting that happened in the will and the heart of the American people through that battle.

I believe the Lord is saying this is "Valley Forge." This is a turning point. As James 4:10 says, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up."* Get on your knees like Washington. Open up your heart in prayer. *"Oh God, we need a turning point. Oh God, in many ways it seems like we're losing the battle. Oh God, it seems like the darkness is getting darker - like there's so much hatred, so many words, so much distortion of facts and Truth in the world. Oh God, we need You to come. We need You to speak Your Truth. We need You to give a shifting, a turning point in our hearts and in our land."*

He's fanning us into a flame. He's causing us to rise up. But we have to make a choice. God sets before us life and death. He sets before us blessing or curse. He sets before us choices. We can sit back and get mad. We can harden up and get sullen - or we can come alive with the One who is Life in us. The One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life - the Lord Jesus Christ. We can receive the Spirit of the living God within us. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. Let there be a shifting, a turning point, a "valley forge" - valley-forged - forged in the valley of these dark and challenging days - to climb up and take the mountains of our destiny.

Valley Forge - isn't it something how God comes to us in the *valleys*? - not so much on the mountain tops - not so much in the times when "all is well with my soul" and all is good with my business, my family, my school, my ministry, my marriage, and with my kids. So many times it's in the *valleys* - the dark places, the low places, the places where we're questioning and struggling, places where we're hurt, angry, and upset - places where we've suffered devastation.

God loves to move in the valleys, in the dark valleys, and the deep valleys. It's in the valleys where God *forges* us. What's a forge? That's a place where there's a fire, and the blacksmith takes the instruments - like taking a sword in the days of George Washington and the battles - he takes a sword and puts it in the fire. It's in the fire where that sword is sharpened. That's a spiritual word for us. In the valleys is where God forges our hearts. That's where he forges us to be his weapons, by his voice and his Word. *"For the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword."* (Hebrews 4:12)

Who is the Word of God? Jesus. And where does Jesus live? In us. "Christ in *us*, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27) We're not Jesus, but we *are* Jesus *followers*. We are the body of Christ. We are filled with the Spirit of Christ. He's speaking his words through our mouths - through our tongues. He's sanctifying our tongues. He's purifying our words. He's giving us hearts that speak life and not death. Lifting up but not breaking down. And the world needs to hear the Word of God. Speaking the truth in love - speaking the truth because of love. The One who is the Truth, who is the Word of God, wants to speak his name through us, wants to speak his life through us, speak his hope through us.

And as he speaks through us, there will be a turnaround. There will be a shifting. He will forge us in the valleys and then lift us up to take the mountain of our destiny. *"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up"* - not to glorify ourselves or our name or our church or our ministry but to glorify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There will come a day when Revelation 11 is fulfilled and the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ and he will reign forever and ever and ever. *Amen!*

The darkest moment of David's life came when he and his men went off into battle, and the Amalechites went into David's camp at Ziklag and stole all the women and children and all of their possessions. David and his men, after returning, were devastated. The people wept until they could weep no more. They were hurt, confused, and angry. David's men were going to stone him to death because they had lost everything. Everything near and dear to them had been taken away. But David inquired of the Lord. He humbled himself in the sight of the Lord and cried out, *"Oh God, what do you want me to do? Oh God, do You want me to pursue these people? Oh God, here I am. What do you want me to do?"*

And David went and strengthened himself in the Lord. In our darkest moments, when we go to God in the valleys, that's where God strengthens us. That's where God encourages us. That's where God reminds us that he is faithful and he is true. And what God has done for us in the past, he will do again today. He will do it in us. He'll do it *through* us. He'll do it in our nation. He'll do it in the earth. *"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray, seek My face, turn from their wicked ways,"* God will hear and God will answer. God will heal.

So David inquired of the Lord and the Lord said *"Pursue,"* and they pursued their enemies. Their enemies were *physical* enemies. *Our* enemies are spiritual enemies - enemies of deception, confusion, intimidation, distortion, perversion, fear, sickness, disease, death, depression, infirmity - those are *our* enemies. And God says to pursue, not in our own strength, our own time, or our own way. We must let the Lord send us in *his* way, *his* time, and in *his* power. The Bible says everything was restored that was taken from David. Nothing was left that wasn't restored completely. Now, that's a turning point. That's a turn-around. That's a shifting of the spiritual atmosphere. That's a manifestation on earth as it is in heaven.

This is our Ziklag, our Valley Forge, and our Turning Point and the Lord is calling us to humble ourselves, call upon his name and he will lift us up. God will bring us into the place of his victory and set us free from everything that would hold us back from being all he created us to be. He will meet us in the places of our valleys - in the dark places - and lift us up. We are the army of the Lord. He is the Warrior Commander saying to us, *"Go in, tread, for the wine press is full. The vats overflow for their wickedness is great. This is a time of harvest. This is a time of war - not war against human beings, but against the spiritual forces of darkness."*

Prayer

Yes, Lord. We humble ourselves. Whatever valley we're in, whatever valley our nation is in, whatever valley the world is in, we cry out to You. We call on Your name. Oh God, hear. Oh God, answer. Oh God, move. Stir up the warriors. Let us be one of Your warriors. Sharpen the sword in the valley forge that we can be a weapon in Your hands for Your glory. In Jesus name. Amen