

## The Hope of America

### Introduction

- Disclaimer: this morning we are going to be looking from a biblical lens at current events. Namely the assassination of Charlie Kirk. While I will not be graphic in any way, If you have young children, whom you are trying to keep from this. It may be best to place them in childcare for this service.
- The world wants to know why a man would get shot for his words. This week, a young man, a prominent political voice, was gunned down at a college campus in Utah, in front of 3000 people, while debating his ideas. He wasn't a criminal, a drug dealer, or a gangster. He was a Christian, conservative activist. He ran a youth movement, and he was taking questions in a public forum. He was at an event called "Prove Me Wrong," and when they could not, they silenced him with a high-powered rifle from a distant rooftop.
  - Charlie Kirk was not killed for a personal offense but because of His public voice. His death wasn't a random act of violence; it was a targeted assassination rooted in pure, unadulterated hatred for the message he carried. He was a Christian brother, unashamed of his savior, who.
    - He was perhaps the most significant public christian witness in our country. His theology was accurate, his love for Christ was clear. His heart for people to receive the gospel was unmatched. At every event he did, he shared the message of Jesus Christ, and invited any who heard to receive him as Lord.
      - He spoke most strongly where faith intersected culture. He spoke on the importance of Life in the womb. He spoke on Biblical standards of gender and sexuality. He spoke on the importance of law and order. He spoke the truth.
  - But just like Paul, his public presence and the message he carried were a direct affront to a society that despises truth. The world hates the message and it will always go after the men who carry it. Charlie Kirk's life was ended because of what he believed and the words he was willing to say. This isn't just a political tragedy; it's a spiritual one. It reminds us that we are participating in a timeless conflict.
- This conflict isn't new. For generations, the world has hated the truth, and it has tried to silence the men who preach it. Two thousand years ago, the most influential man in the world, the Apostle Paul, found himself in a similar situation. Unlike Charlie Kirk, Paul had escaped the assassination attempts on his life, and was headed to Rome. He was not a free man, he was shackled to a Roman guard. He arrived in chains. From a worldly perspective, his mission was a failure. He was a "prisoner...delivered from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans," a man whose voice was seemingly silenced... But we know better.

### Acts 28:17-28

After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the

Romans. 18 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.” 21 And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. 25 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

26 “Go to this people, and say, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’

28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense,[g] and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

## Context

Let's talk for a minute about worldviews. Everyone has one, it is essentially the lens through which you see the rest of the world. In a sense it is a summation of your ultimate beliefs of about life and reality. and it colors or clarifies warps your perception of everything around you.

- For the Christian, our worldview, our lens is scripture itself. This book is what we use to help us see the world and give us greater clarity on what we see. It takes confusing and fuzzy issues, and makes them clear.
- For the Nihilist They believe that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. It often results in a rejection of moral principles and knowledge itself. It's a worldview that finds no inherent truth or reason for being.
- For the Critical Marxist, They view the world through power, oppression, and emancipation. Everything is seen through the lens of minorities and the underprivileged. Who has too much power, who has not enough.
- Where politics fall on the spectrum of thought and beliefs. Worldviews are always political. Now they are more than political but they are never less than political. It is impossible to hold to a worldview that has no influence on politics. It is impossible to be a Christian and not have your faith inform and influence your understanding of politics. Especially when politics encroaches so deeply upon what are strictly spiritual truths. Such as the divine value of Life. The Biblical understanding of sexuality. The value of the nuclear family. Law and justice. God is not silent on these subjects.

- Every worldview influences how we see God, how we see morality, how we see our purpose in life, and how we see politics. But what we sometimes fail to understand is that all worldviews but one are created intentionally by Satan to keep people from a knowledge of the truth. To blind people from what really matters. This is what happens in our passage this morning.

## The Gospel Is The Hope Of Israel

- The book of Acts has this pattern. Paul shows up in a new city, he goes to the synagogue, he preaches to the Jews first, and then he turns to the Gentiles. It happens in every city, from Antioch to Ephesus. And now, he's in Rome, the capital of the world.
  - And one final time he goes back to the Jews. and they seem as though they might be receptive. They tell Paul that they had no idea what this christianity thing was about... only that, "this sect is spoken against everywhere"
    - Hope! Finally Paul can share with some Jews who have an open mind!
      - And what was his message? The Gospel is the Hope of Israel. That Christianity is not a rebellion against Judaism but its very fulfillment
- Prove
  - Psalm 118:22-23 speaks of a stone rejected by builders that becomes the cornerstone
  - Zechariah foretold the king arriving on a donkey
  - Isaiah 53 describes a suffering servant who takes the punishment of others
  - Old Testament passages described the piercing of hands and feet, the casting of lots for his clothes, and the giving of vinegar for his thirst, all details of Jesus's crucifixion
  - Conservatively, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry.
- Yet we know what happened. Paul preached for a full day, and a lot of those men still walked away unchanged. Why? Because they came with hearts that were already hardened. They came to debate, to fight, to attack. They weren't prepared to meet the King. Despite the messiah coming and dying before their very eyes, they were blind to it. The hope of Israel was, and is Jesus Christ.
  - This book, the book of acts is both timeless and timely, because in it we see over and over again, God's people murdered for their faith. For their message, because they could not be silenced. Remember Acts 7 where Stephen stood before the smartest biblical scholars in the world, and
    - Acts 6:10 - they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.
    - Acts 7:57-58a - But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him.
      - It happened then. And it is happening now. This murder this week is the single most prominent example in my lifetime, of persecution to the point of death. But it shouldn't surprise us.

## The Gospel Is A Dividing Sword

- Paul agrees to another meeting, and when the appointed day comes, they show up "in even larger numbers"
  - Paul preaches "from morning until evening". He doesn't give them a little elevator pitch. He doesn't hand them a brochure. He spends an entire day expounding and persuading. He's taking them through the entire Old Testament... Moses and the Prophets... and showing them, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, that the entire puzzle of their faith is incomplete without Jesus.
    - Some heard and believed, many did not. This led to a vigorous disagreement among them, and they began to leave. As they were leaving, Paul delivered a final, stinging statement, quoting the Holy Spirit through the prophet Isaiah:
      - Vs 26-28 - "Go to this people, and say, 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.' 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'
      - The deeper theological meaning of Paul's quote from Isaiah 6 is that of **judicial hardening**. The message of salvation, when presented to a "calloused heart," can act as a catalyst for a deeper rejection of the truth.
        - This is not a failure to be persuasive; rather, it is a divine confirmation of an already-existing rebellious heart.
      - This hardening serves as a form of righteous Judgement. It is exactly what Romans 1 speaks of when it says that God gave them over to a debased mind. The consequences of their hard hearts is being completely cut off, disconnected from God.
    - The Gospel is designed to separate the sheep from the goats, the light from the darkness.
- Prove
  - Matthew 10:34-36 - "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36 And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.
- Apply
  - This was the Final Witness for God's people. The last act of love for Paul's kinsmen, and it should remind us that the opportunity to repent will not last forever.
    - You do not get infinite chances at this. There is a day of wrath coming... I don't know if it is in a decade, or in a year, or in an hour. But it is coming. Take salvation while it is still being offered. Because the more you reject it, the harder your heart will become.
      - You can't just be a spectator. You can't just listen and nod your head. You have to decide.

- You might say that Charlie Kirk was divisive... and that is true. But the division he created was not an unfortunate side effect, it was the inevitable result of speaking truth to a people who have "closed their eyes" and whose hearts have "become calloused".
  - The hatred that led to Charlie Kirk's death is the same spiritual hatred Paul describes. He was assassinated because he took on the prevailing wisdom of the age. An age that says a boy can be a girl, a baby can be murdered so long as the umbilical cord is still attached. An age that celebrates violence and death.
    - By the way, if you claim to be about tolerance and love, but you celebrate when someone you don't agree with is murdered, you are not tolerant. You are not loving. And You have become the very thing you claim to hate the most.
  - Sometimes people get so caught up in rooting for their side to win, that they fail to even ask whether or not their side is right! It is absolutely tragic.
- We are in a War. That is not language I am coming up with. That is biblical language. We are at the center of a spiritual battle. We are soldiers who wield our weapon against the enemies of God.
  - 1. Remember who our enemies are.
    - Ephesians 6:12 - For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
      - We are living in a time of spiritual warfare. The enemy is not a political party or a secular movement; it is the force of darkness that hates God and seeks to destroy His truth.
      - Let me say this more pointedly. Our enemy is not the college professor, our enemy is not those who are trying to transition their gender, our enemy is not even the shooter on a rooftop putting bullets into our people.
        - Our enemies are spiritual forces at work, manipulating people and cultures and government into destroying themselves and hating and attacking God. Remember who the enemies are.
  - 2. Remember what our weapon is.
    - 2nd Corinthians 10:3-5a - For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God
      - Bullets and swords cannot affect our enemy. Our enemy is fought with words. Namely the Word of God. We fight with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We stand as Steven stood, as Paul stood, as Charlie stood. Upon the truth of God. and

we tear down every worldview that sets itself up against God Almighty.

- We put on our armor. We take up our sword. And we go to battle. This is how we win the war.

## **The Gospel is Never Chained (Conclusion)**

- 28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”
  - Paul is awaiting Trial, but really it was the message that He brought that the Jews were trying to kill. They wanted his words silenced. But God will never allow His message to be silenced. No one has authority over the message of God. He's engaging their minds with facts and evidence, and he's engaging their hearts, their will, and their affections. And yet they reject. And so what does Paul do?
- He takes the message of God to the end of the earth.
  - The book of Acts doesn't end with Paul's death or his trial. It ends with a paradoxical picture: a man in chains, and a message that is “without hindrance.” This is the truth we need to wrestle with today: God sometimes chains His own, sometimes he brings them home. In order to prove that His truth is utterly unstoppable.
    - After the Jewish leaders left, Paul made his final, world-changing declaration: "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!". This is a monumental shift. It marks an invisible dividing line in Scripture, where God revokes the Jews' priority status and extends His salvation to all people, regardless of their nationality
- God will get the gospel where it needs to go, with or without your cooperation. And your life is not your own.
  - You have a choice: you can be passive and timid, or you can be warriors who "stand firm in the faith" and "link arms" with other Christians and fight back.

## **Pray/Invitation**