

## Recall of the Wild

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By Tony Perkins - Family Research Council

If California Governor Gavin Newsom (D) had it to do over again, he might not be so quick to shut down churches. His lockdown legacy, one of hypocrisy and double standards, has made plenty of area Democrats regret his COVID strategy -- especially now that the most important job in California may be decided by the houses of worship he spurned. As a result of Newsom's heavy-handed approach to churches, local congregations are more engaged in state politics than ever -- and that's bad news for anyone in the governor's mansion who thought their jobs were safe.

"We're seeing something in California that we have never seen before," Calvary Chapel Chino Hills Pastor Jack Hibbs insisted on "Washington Watch." "Now, you and I... we've been standing in this water for a long time," he said, "but to see hundreds and hundreds of churches up and down the state [inviting Republican challenger] Larry Elder [to a] Sunday morning service? This has been tremendous. The churches are no longer taking this tyranny." Jack, who's been instrumental in Elder's meteoric rise, believes there's a real chance that the entire nation will be shocked after the [recall election](#) next Tuesday.

"What happens here if Larry Elder becomes governor?" he wondered aloud. "Then everything changes... all of a sudden it takes California from the ash heap and puts it front and center stage on what could be a turnaround in American politics." A turnaround that even [the Los Angeles Times admits](#) may all be owed to people of faith taking a more active role in the race. Elder himself, appearing at Sunday services all around the state, has done what few California candidates have been willing to: he ran *to* the church, not away from it.

"People of faith, in my opinion," he told the sea of faces in the sanctuary of Destiny Christian Church, "have stood on the sidelines for far too long. We need to get involved. And that's why I'm running. I feel that I have a patriotic, a moral, and a spiritual obligation to fix this state to the extent that I can." Elsewhere, other Republican candidates have started leaning into the religious tailwind. Harnessing all of their frustration over church closures and Newsom's outrageous policies, they've turned it into momentum for their campaigns. Would Elder, Destiny's head pastor asked pointedly, ever use his "executive power to limit freedom of religion?" "Of course not," he replied to overwhelming applause.

The popular radio host has earned plenty of supporters simply by refusing to shy away from the explosive issues. On critical race theory, Elder said he'd be willing to ban it from curriculum -- a move, along with many others, that's led his "tolerant" opposition to label him a "[black white supremacist](#)." He's unapologetically pro-life, pro-religious freedom -- and if that clashes with the LGBT agenda, well, too bad. As a young kid who was raised by hard-working parents to appreciate education, Elder embraces school choice and parental involvement -- positions the Left completely dismissed until the GOP started creeping up in the polls.

Now, Elder is such a threat that even Vice President Kamala Harris has come out of hiding to stump for the increasingly nervous "recalled" governor. "They think if they can win in California,

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they said this anywhere. Well," she shouted, "we'll show them: you're not gonna get this done. Not here, never!" But the reality, Hibbs pointed out, is that things have been brewing in the state -- setting the stage for change -- for a while now.  
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"I think California suffers in the general media across the nation. We suffer from not getting much coverage except over the nuttiness. What the media doesn't cover are the great things that have been happening in California for years -- and you're watching it happen now. But a lot of people forget that in 2020, up and down the ballot in the state of California turned incredibly red. In fact, we flipped four Democrat stronghold congressional seats to pro-life, born-again, believing congresswomen and men who we sent to Washington. Nobody talked about that. Nobody talked about the fact that mayors and offices in California in November went red. The news never covered it."

And a lot of that, Jack agrees, is because churches decided to rise up and engage. They got politically savvy, taking advantage of new laws like ballot collecting that were specifically designed to help the Left. No one expected pastors to study the landscape and mobilize an army to protect their votes. "We were the first church to adopt a Democrat strategy," Jack points out. "They legalized exactly what you just said -- ballot harvesting. We didn't like the name of it, so we changed it to ballot collection. And frankly... in 2020, we actually perfected their tactics. We did it openly, legally, based on California law, and we beat them in their own game. We're continuing to do that now... And it's working."

But regardless of what happens on September 14th, the most important victory in California has already happened -- the revival breaking out in Bible-believing churches across the state. The last year and a half of defying the over-reaching arm of government, fighting the lockdowns, and welcoming in people thirsty for worship have sparked an incredible gospel awakening up and down the coast. Just since May 31<sup>st</sup>, Calvary Chapel Chino Hills alone has baptized over 3,000 people -- all as a result of keeping their doors open and remaining faithful to the preaching of God's word. And in the end, that's what will ultimately transform this country: a Christ-centered change of heart that leads to whole communities' change of actions.