

Hillside Fellowship Church

9am service

10/11/20

[worship]

Pastor Dave: And Father, we come to just to applaud you. Your love has indeed won that love that you have for this world that led you to send your son, Jesus. Your love led you to the cross to die in our place for our sin. So we come simply to say thank you that you've met our every need eternally.

And so now I pray as I empty myself and just ask that you would use me with your Spirit and to use me to feed and strengthen and encourage your sheep, your children, for your glory. We look forward to hearing from you. And I do pray that you would use the truth from your word this morning to impact our hearts that we might shine as a light in a really dark world. Would you strengthen us to that end and fill us with your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, welcome. As you're grabbing a seat, I'm so glad to have so many of you back and a lot of newcomers. And so, for those of who it's your first time here, I want to welcome you. My name's Dave. Again, nothing special about me. I'm a new creature in Christ. I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic and I get the pleasure each week to open the scriptures with you.

We've been looking in Acts about how Jesus changes everything. If you wonder why we can get together and sing, that might seem strange to you. But as Christians who have read the Bible, we not only believe, but we're convinced that

Jesus has, historically is and ultimately will change everything. Because if you've ever read the Bible, you get to the end in Revelation 21, and it says, here's in fact what Jesus is going to do.

There's no longer any death or mourning or crying or pain. He wipes every tear from every eye and he proclaims, I am making all things new. So there really is reason to rejoice. I don't care how bad the 24-hour news cycle is . . .

[Laughter]

. . . we know what's coming so we live in line with that, not with what the world reacts to each day. So I'm so glad you're here. We've been looking at how Jesus has changed everything through the book of Acts. It's the historical account of where this, the church, the body of Christ, came from. Where it began. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a life without sin, he was crucified and was buried and he publicly rose again.

So he showed us that truth of our ultimate need. Resurrection. That our lives, although short on this earth, there's hope of eternity with him. And so, if you'll open to Revelation chapter 2, verse 7 -- we're in Acts 19 actually. Let me tell you what I'm about to do. This could be the worse sermoning ever.

[Laughter]

Honestly. I never know. Like, I'm going to be just as surprised as you. You jump into Acts 19 and it's about the planting of the church in Ephesus. So this is one of the most intriguing sections of scripture, because in Acts, typically you

get the church planted and then you don't hear much more about them. In Acts 19, we get the planting of the church in Ephesus and it starts really well. A lot of people coming to Jesus. But in Revelation, we get towards the end of the story of this church and we see a bigger picture of what happened in Ephesus.

And in fact, in between, you get an epistle, Ephesians, written to the church at Ephesus, and you get two letters written to Timothy who is the pastor there. So I love this section, because it not only gives you the beginning of the church, but also the end of the church and the middle of the church. And you read Ephesians and 1 and 2 Timothy in a brand new light.

Here's where I'm going with this. Have you ever met a Christian who got really old in Christ and they got really crusty and they were missing love? Anybody? How about this? Have you ever been in a relationship where over the years love waned and one or both of the partners was no longer willing to sacrifice self for the well-being of another and that marriage, that relationship broke up?

It's a problem we all face. Love leaks. And so watch. Here's the end of the church at Ephesus. I'll read it to you. Revelation chapter 2, verses 1 through 7. God says, John writes, 1 "To the angel in the church of Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks amongst the seven golden lampstands . . . (Jesus) . . . says this: (Ephesians)

2 I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and that you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and

you found them to be false, 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love" You love has grown cold.

5 "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first, or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand . . . (you won't have me in your midst anymore) . . . unless you repent." . . . (Turn, that change of mind and change of behavior.). . . .

6 "Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

So, we've got the church at Ephesus. Let me give you a big picture, small picture transition statement, an overarching theme of this passage. It's long. My task this morning is impossible. Walk through 41 verses in the Bible in 30 minutes. Here's the big picture. If you read straight through the Bible, just read straight through, you would leave with this. 1 John 4:8. "God is love." He ultimately sacrifices for others' well-beings. That's agape.

God's love. Here's the small theological picture. Sin separates us from the love of God. We now love ourselves. Wherever sin remains, relationship dies. Sin has come to steal, kill and destroy. Wherever sin remains, love dies, slowly, over time. And love [speaking Latin], it bends in on itself. All I can think about is me. I love me some me. I want you to think about me. I think about me. I think good thoughts about me. I want you to think good thoughts about

me. That's what love turned in on itself does.

The Bible tells the story, it's a true story of what we call the good news. The gospel. That God so loved this world that he sent his only begotten Son, that Jesus came and demonstrates the love of God. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That he shed his love abroad in our hearts when we were born again. Beloved, if God has so loved us, how ought we to love one another?

Jesus was asked, what's the whole summation of the law? What's the greatest commandment? Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor. He would tell us, love our enemies. Paul would write young Timothy. 1 Timothy, chapter 1 verse 5, the goal of this instruction this morning, the goal of our instruction is love.

The church was planted in Ephesians and the gospel advanced in the face of adversity. But this morning, I want to do a gospel autopsy at the church of Ephesus. You ever done an autopsy? Cut something apart in biology class? I did. It was frogs. In fact, when I was cutting it apart, I poked myself with the exacto knife. It's probably why they don't give kids exacto knives anymore.

Didn't turn into a superhero. The Frogman that I wanted. Why am I talking about -- oh, gospel autopsy on the church. Ah, I'm tired. And I'm going to show you. How does this love wane? And you can ask this question in your marriage this morning, in whatever relationship. In your relationship with God, watch what happens. I'm going to show you the things that happened in Ephesus are amazing.

Let me walk you through. We'll start out in Acts, chapter

19:1 through 10. Watch where it starts out. Verse 1 through 10 is going to cover about two years and three months that Paul's in there. And then verse 11 down through verse 20 is going to explain something that happened during those two years and three months and then the last 20 verses are just going to talk about this massive riot that takes place.

What can we learn from these historical events that will help us in our marriages, in our relationships today so that we don't end up at the end of our story loveless. Working hard, doing a lot, very busy, but unmoved inside by the gospel to sacrifice our well-being for the well-being of others.

Watch this. Verses 1 through 10. God says, Luke writes here, 1 "It happened . . .

Remember last week, Apollos Olaoye understood part of the message. He was preaching a baptism of repentance. He only knew what John the baptizer preached. So he's preaching a partial message, but we don't need to be afraid. God fills in our gaps.

1 "It happened that while Appollus was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. 2 He (Paul) said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit!'"

We don't know what that is. 3 "And so he (Paul) said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism'. 4 Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.'" 5 When they heard this,

they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. 7 There were in all about twelve men."

Sometimes when the Spirit comes, it's subtle. Sometimes when the Spirit comes it's spectacular. Paul's just describing what happened. Verse 8. Watch what happens next.

8 And he (Paul) entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of tyrannus.

10 This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

So what you have here is really a picture of our lives. Sometimes when you share the gospel, that God is loved, that he so loved this world, he sent his Son, sometimes you'll have reception. Sometimes when you tell people about the gospel, they're like, yeah, I'm ready to go. I need the information. The Spirit of God has worked on my heart and when you share Christ, they're ready to go.

In verse 8, 9 and 10, sometimes when you share the gospel, people say, heck, no. So some people are ready to go. Some people say, heck, no. Here's the bottom line. Rejection is universal. It's a common human experience. Do you know this? How many of you have felt rejection in

any form? Okay. See? You look around. It's 100%. Rejection is universal. It is a human condition in a fallen world. *And* I need you to know, rejection and criticism is very sticky to our souls.

In fact, let me run a little test quickly. How many of you, when you have a criticism, or you've been rejected and somebody's criticised you, that sticks with you for a really long time? You think -- oh, hands are going up quick. Like, it will stick with you for a long, long, long time, won't it? How many of you, when you get a compliment, that sticks with you for just as long?

[Chuckling.]

Very amazing. Criticism and rejection is incredibly sticky to our souls. In fact, it's radioactive to our souls. Paul is amazing. When your identity is based in Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter whether it's a compliment or criticism, it doesn't get to name you, define you. The gospel is like goof-off. Criticism loses its stickiness. The gospel just takes it off because I no longer find my identity in what you think about me.

Listen, if you don't understand this, your marriage will fall apart, your relationships will fall apart. We step on each others' toes. Just go take a physics class. Newton's Third Law. Every action, opposite and equal reaction. Here's what's going on in America. One political side will criticize and reject the other political side. And guess what they do? Criticize and reject the other side.

You ever seen Newton's Cradle? Those silver balls? That will explain exactly what's going on in America. I hate you.

Well, I hate you. Well, I hate you. Well, I hate you. Well, I hate you. That is exactly what is happening. Now, what do you do with rejection, Christian? Let me tell you. God wants to do something miraculous in us and through us.

You see, when that rejection comes, did you see what Paul did? It's right there. Verse 9. "But when some were hardened, disobedient, speaking evil of the Way, he withdrew. Total miracle. Paul, we hate you. We reject you. Well, I'm just going to withdraw. You see, many of us, when we get rejected, we have to come back harder, with more. You hit us? We'll hit you harder. That just means they're going to hit harder. Then they're going to hit harder.

You want to do something miraculous? When you get hit, don't repay evil for evil. Because when there's nothing to push against, the other side falls. That's physics. It's true in the spiritual realm as well. Let me tell you this. Many of us Christians, when we get rejected over and over, we just go Chuck Norris on the opposite side, pull a 1062 in police code, breaking and entering, and kick down the door. We just keep kicking.

Or we'll do it passively aggressively. We'll leave a Gideon Bible by their nightstand.

[Laughter.]

Just so happens, it's open to Ephesians 4. What's that? I don't know. Isn't the Spirit of God amazing? No. You're manipulative.

[Laughter]

And that doesn't help people open up to the truth. It actually causes them to put more deadbolts on the door. So Paul shows up. Some people say, yes. Some people say, no. Here's the principle. Love the harvest that Jesus gives you and love the haters that are around you. Haters are gonna hate. Yeah. Taylor Swift. They're going to hate. That's what they have inside. That's all they can do. So love the harvest. Some people will come to Jesus. Love that! I get to enjoy that every week.

Some people are going to hate the gospel. Love them. Don't push back. You see, if you don't take your criticisms to Christ, your soul will be cold and callous towards them. How do you go from an amazing, miraculous, spirit-filled church to a loveless church? I can tell you. You don't take your criticism to Christ. In your marriage, if you don't take them to Christ, your heart will become cold and calloused toward the other person.

You will actually begin to see your spouse as the problem, not the point.

[Laughter]

No, honestly. I will sit in counseling for hours. And it looks like a tennis match. He said. She said. He said. She said. He said. She said. We get done. Two hours, I'm exhausted from listening and watching. And we've made no progress because we're doing Newton's Cradle. You want to do something amazing, something profound? Learn to love your enemy.

Stop fighting fire with fire. Have you ever read through OSHA under the department of labor? OSHA. Occupational

Safety Health Administration code 1910.157?

[Laughter]

I'm sorry. I've got to stop.

[Laughter]

Google it on your Google machines. It's amazing. I couldn't sleep. I'm reading an OSHA handbook. I don't know why. Don't fire with fire. Ends up, get a fire extinguisher. That's what they say. We've got them here. Portable fire extinguishers. Stop returning evil for evil. Your heart will become cold and calloused if you don't take those criticisms to Christ.

And you will see lost people as the problem, not the point. You'll work hard, but you'll never love like Jesus loved. Now watch this. 11 through 20. This is long. Nine minutes. I'm going to read through it. Repentance is a great thing. By the way, I think in Ephesians chapter 4, this is why Paul would say in verse 32. Why, when Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, they were fighting with one another. He said, be kind to one another. Tender-hearted, compassionate, forgiving each other even as God, in Christ Jesus has forgiven who?

Yeah! Now you're going to read through Timothy in Ephesians in a totally different way. Their love was already becoming hardened and Paul was trying to soften them up through the gospel. I honestly think this is why Paul wrote 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 13 where Paul said, Timothy, if they're rejecting the gospel, remember. Here's a trustworthy statement, worthy of acceptance that Christ Jesus came into

this world to save sinners, among whom I am chief and foremost.

Timothy, I rejected the gospel. Don't grow hard towards them and cold towards them, because if you do, you'll lose love and grow calloused and cold. Now watch this. 11 through 20. This is one of the most interesting sections of scripture. I'm not going to have time to exegete it fully with you. I don't know what to do with it. It's profound. It's wild. You get streakers in the Bible. Watch. I like it. It's old school. I mean it's just amazing.

11 "God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hand of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs and aprons were even carried from his body to the sick and diseases left them, and evil spirits went out."

So God was doing these. Paul didn't even know they were going on. People would pick up a hanky that he dropped and God would use that to heal other people. So they were real deal miracles, but they're also phony baloneys. Watch this.

Verse 13. Contrasting conjunction, "But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying 'I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.' 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this."

Seven dudes. 15 "And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you, (dude)?' 16 And the man, in whom was the evil Spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered

them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

One dude took on seven. Now watch what happens as a result of this. This is why Luke is sharing it. 17 "This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. 18 Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices."

So these were believers who were repainting now. Watch this. 19 "And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." About probably 6 to 8 million dollars today.

20 "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." So here, Luke simply highlights real miracles and phony baloney. These seven cats who were gaining something for using Jesus' name. The amazing part to me is that the Bible says these were believers who then repented and burned all of their dark magic books. Did you see that? They were believers, but they had a foot in each world. It was like, on Sunday I come worship Jesus because he's my savior. But then Monday through Saturday, I live like hell because I'm the Lord of my life.

Does that sound familiar? Like, you can say, the church in America is ridiculous. It's full of consumer Christians. They say they're born again, but they live like hell. Well, this has kind of always been the case. Many of us come to Jesus and say, you want to save me from hell? That's awesome. I

love that. You're my savior, but I'm going to be the sultan in my life. I'm going to call the shots.

Now, what happens is that they see this spiritual battle is real. Something wakes them up to their need for Jesus not only to be savior, but also to be Lord. And that's a good thing. Repentance is always a good thing. Let me ask you this, then. How can repentance be a bad thing? What about this event could have led to lovelessness?

I call it the campfire experience. Any baptists grow up going to Baptist camp and you had a Baptist campfire? How many of you burned your AC/DC tapes.

[Laughter]

Thank you. Thank you. You laugh. It was a normal occurrence. It regularly happened. Like, so much so that you would just bring your AC/DC tapes with you to camp. It's like, well, I know what Friday's going to be and I'm going to burn my AC/DC tapes and then I'll backslide and buy more. Which is actually just helping AC/DC make more money. But, okay.

[Laughter]

I came to that conclusion by 13.

[Laughter]

So you go to camp, you burn it, and that's a good thing. If the Lord so moves you to burn your AC/DC tapes or Striper tapes or Metallica tapes or whatever. Alcohol, whatever you're going to burn. That's a good thing. But have you ever

noticed what happens after the Lord moves radically in my life to burn my tapes? Then I go home and I tell my brothers. You guys need to burn your tapes.

Well, they weren't at the campfire. They didn't have the same experience. They didn't have the rousing speakers that told me how bad it was and if you found a way to play the tape backward, it said horrible things.

[Laughter]

That was big in the 80s. Like, I couldn't even figure out how to turn it backwards, but I was sure -- it was bad enough forwards. I don't even know why you have to listen to it backwards, right? But I would go home and then tell my brothers. You guys need to burn all your tapes too. And if they didn't, which they never did, then I would feel morally superior to them. At least I burned my tapes.

This happens. We call it legalism. We've got legalists here this morning. For thousands of years, the church has had legalists. Where God grants you grace, you repent and then you expect everyone to be as radical as you are. In fact, we'll start bashing on people. We'll bash on consumer Christians. I happen to give a lot of grace to consumer Christians because I used to be one.

Oh, you guys have never done it? Okay. I need to take you through 1 John. 1 John talks about different stages and ages of Christians. Some Christians are non-believers. What? That wasn't true at all. Delete that from the file. Some Christians are young believers. Very, very young. Do you know what babies do? They cry and they consume. It's what babies are really good at. Did you know that?

This is what babies do. They whine and they consume. But then John says, some of you are young men. Young men tend to be very zealous and we conquer. Everybody needs to be on mission and engaged in war!

So if consumer Christians consume and cry and whine, young men tend to be very conquering, zealous. We'll whip it into shape. Then you have what he calls fathers, or old men. And when you grow to that level, you tend to be very contrite, because you look and you see the sin in your own life and you understand Jesus has been very gracious to me. So you tend to be very gracious to one another. Repentance can be a very, very bad thing if it leads to haughtiness.

I think this is why Paul would write in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 2. Write this down. With all humility, tenderness, gentleness, bear with one another. Be incredibly patient with one another. We're all at different ages and stages in this thing. So be gentle. I think this is why Paul probably wrote Timothy. 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 24. The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, argumentive, but able to instruct, correct those who are in opposition. If by change they might come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil.

You see we're all at different stages. If you use the Bible as binoculars to check out what everybody else is doing, your repentance has not led to humility and it's a tragedy. If you use the Bible as binoculars to check out what your spouse is doing and correct them, you're misusing and weaponizing the Bible. Your repentance has led to haughtiness, not humility. A repentance that doesn't lead to humility is a tragedy.

So repentance is a great thing. Something happened in the church at Ephesus, though their repentance led to haughtiness, not humility that was tender and compassionate with one another. Watch what happens next. I got 23 seconds to go through 20 verses.

[Laughter]

You laugh. Watch this. Watch what happens. Verse 21. I'm going to read 21 straight to 41 because it's all one story. If I sum it up, Paul preaches the gospel that threatens the idol that the Ephesians worship and they rage because of it. And that always happens. If I threaten your idol -- in fact, if I talked about politics this morning -- in fact, I may do that.

[Laughter]

No, honestly. If we talk about politics, I'm touching an idol. So I know I'll get at least 15 emails saying, how dare you. You're a coward. Why don't you step up to the plate and do something mattering and meaningful. Watch. Whenever you touch an idol, expect rage. Because you are touching something that they derive life, hope, joy, peace from.

Watch what happens here. Verse 21. "Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through macdunnoa and Achaia, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.' 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he (Paul) himself stayed in Asia for a while."

Planted the seven churches that were in that area. 23

"About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way."

Now watch this. 24 "For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, . . . (the temple of Diana) . . . was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, 'Men, you know that our prosperity . . . (there it is. Our prosperity demands on this idol, upon this business) . . . 26 'You see and hear that no only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that . . . "

Here's what Paul was saying. " 'gods made with human hands are no gods at all'. " Seems like a pretty wise statement, amen? Like if you made it and then you're worshipping it, who's the dumb-dumb?

[Laughter]

I mean, it just seems obvious, if you made it -- can I get an amen? If you made that, and then you're worshipping that, that's really foolish. That's why we don't ask people, how much do you make? In America, it's very rude. Because we know if you make that money, many of us worship it. Isn't that dumb? It's really senseless. But here, they get mad about it.

Watch verse 27. " 'Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis . . . (or Diana) . . . be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence!."

Doesn't sound like a very powerful God if she's threatened by one dude saying, hey, gods made with human hands are no gods at all. Watch verse 28. "When they heard this they were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, 'Great is Artemis of the ephesians!' 29 The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.

31 Also some of the Asiarchs . . . (the political religious leaders) . . . who were friends (with Paul) sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. 32 So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly.

34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'" So they were defending their idol; their God. 35 "After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, 'Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven?' 36 So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38 So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him

have a complaint against any man, the courselet are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in a lawful assembly. 40 For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.' 41 After saying this he dismissed the assembly."

Long section. Let me sum it up very simply. The world is a corrosive place. Just look at the periodic table of elements. Some elements are corrosive to us. You happen to be made for a garden that's perfect. And this world is a corrosive place. Now, here's the danger. The church has always picked up elements of every culture that she has existed in. I don't have time to fully flush out that argument.

If you look at Greece, the church became very intellectual because it was an intellectual place. If you look at Rome and the spread of the church in Rome, it became very institutional. Look at the Roman Catholic church. Because the government was an institution in and of itself. If you look at Europe, the gospel became very formal. It still is. Big cathedrals, tea party type stuff, but no internal change.

If you look at America, the gospel, when it came to America, it became very entrepreneurial. If you look at south Texas, the gospel in south Texas became very individual. Don't tread on me. I'll have a gate at the front of my yard. I'll have a gate in their subdivision. I'll have a gate to get into the gate to get into the gate. Amen? And that doesn't really help, so I'm thinking about another gate and then a bunker.

[Laughter]

I've seen some of your houses.

[Laughter]

Like, I literally have. I'm like, that's awesome. When World War III comes -- but when I zoom out, it is. The gospel has become very individual. It's about me and God. Not me and anyone else. Now, what happened here in Acts 19, I just call it the wrinkly finger principle. Anybody? You go swimming. You stay in the water for an hour. What happens to your fingers and toes?

Yeah, they're wrinkly. They used to think it was hyperhidrosis. Harvard Review wrote an article. 2017. It's not. It's the blood vessels constricting. Whatever it is, your fingers wrinkle because of the environment you're in. It's very interesting here. The church gets planted in Ephesus and there's rage and outbursts and anger and outcries. The church has always picked up the environment in every culture that they live in.

Have you ever read through Ephesians? I think this is why Paul would write Ephesians chapter 4, verse 26. Be angry but don't sin and don't let the sin go down on your anger. In fact, in chapter 4 of Ephesians, verse 31, I think it's why Paul would write, let all bitterness, anger, rage, malice, these outbursts be put away from you. You see, because the church has always taken on some of the elements of the culture around them

This was true of Ephesus if you fast forward to 94 AD. Timothy was still pastor there and they were still worshipping

Artemis. They came out for a parade to worship Diana and old Timothy got out and he began to preach the gospel. And guess what the Ephesians did to Timothy in 94 AD. Yeah, they beat him down, stoned him, dragged him through the city and put him to death.

That anger was still there. You see, here's the principle in it. When we use the world's mode, means and method for fighting the world, we become like the world. Let me say this again. When we use the world's modes, means and methods and use those methods to fight against the world, guess what? We've become like the world and the light of the glory of the gospel is lost.

So if you want to engage in the Facebook fight politically, if you enjoy that, go ahead. If you want to join the Twitter tirade, feel free. But it's using the world's modes, means and methods to fight with the world *and* you will become like the world and you'll sacrifice the gospel. You see, I have friends who are profound, steeped in their democratism. And I have friends who are steeped in their republicanism. And when I spend hours talking with them, do you know both are afraid of the same thing.

I spend hours on both sides just listening. On the right? They're going to take our freedoms! Pick which freedom. 2nd Amendment. Whatever. You know what it is on the left? They're going to take our freedoms over my body, over whatever. So we're actually afraid of the same thing. The government gives us our freedoms and we want our freedoms. I just happen to philosophically, intellectually and biblically disagree with you. Both sides.

But, Dave, how can that be? If we don't win this election,

we'll lose our freedoms. It's actually not true for me. Constitutionally or biblically. I'll argue at either side. I don't know if you want to listen. Because we're not quick to listen. If you ask me, Dave, aren't you afraid of losing your freedoms, I would say, no. Not in the least. And I'll argue it from the Declaration of Independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident. I don't even have to explain them.

[Laughter]

That's what TJ was saying. Well, that's not the point. I just love that because Thomas Jefferson was like, I'm not even going to explain it because they're self-evident. If you can't see it, you're a dumb-dumb.

[Laughter]

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. And if we believe that, that does away with the racism, sexism, all those differences. The next word is super duper important. Endowed, bequeathed, gifted, granted, freely bestowed upon, endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. Governments are instituted among men to preserve these rights.

But governments can't give those rights. They don't have those rights to give. So the government can't take or give. They can recognize the truth of how God created it and be blessed, or they can function as though those things aren't real and God will deal with them. But see, I don't get my freedoms from government. Biblically, John chapter 8, I get

my freedoms from God.

And if the Son has set you free, you're free. You're free indeed, bro! Nobody can touch my freedom. Nobody can touch my life. God has granted me freedom through Christ. I'm free from sin. I'm free from shame. I'm free from guilt. I'm free from condemnation. God has purchased my freedom.

Oh, you want to take my guns. Okay, whatever. Oh, that didn't land at all.

[Laughter]

At all!

[Laughter]

I know I hugged a whole bunch of you and I know a bunch of you are packing.

[Laughter]

Right? I didn't even wear my bullet proof vest this morning. This is how confident I am in God.

[Laughter]

Do you see what I'm saying? If the government gives you your freedoms, then you have to fight to maintain control of government. And you will look at lost people as the problem, not the point. You see, the point of our instruction -- let me end with this. The point of our instruction, Paul wrote Timothy, 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 5. The goal of our

instruction is love. You want to make a difference? Don't find the world with the methods, modes and means of the world.

You want to make a difference? Learn what it means to love. You see, Hillside Fellowship, if we speak the most eloquent speeches that have ever been spoken on the face of the earth and do not have love, we've actually become annoying. A noisy gong or a clanging symbol. If I understand all mysteries and all prophecies and if I'm super duper smart and I explain all of Daniel's prophecies and all of Revelation prophecy but don't have love, I'm nothing. Nothing!

And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, surrendering my own body to be burned but don't have love, it profits me nothing. You see, you want to make a difference in this world, stop paying evil for evil so that evil keeps going on. Love is not a feeling. It is a fierce choice to walk. Love is patient. Love is kind. It isn't jealous. It doesn't brag. It isn't arrogant. It doesn't act uncomely. It doesn't seek its own. It isn't provoked. It does not take into account a wrong suffered.

Just do that one with your spouse today. Put the list down. Allow him to sensitize your heart so it's not calloused towards your spouse. It'll change everything because you'll stop beating each other up. And you can stop Newton's Third Law. It's miraculous. You can go all Matrix on this junk. No, honestly. It's like, I want to see miracles. Good. The next time you're ridiculed and reviled, like Jesus was reviled, don't revile in return. You remain suspended and say, I'm not going to return evil for evil.

I'm going to OSHA 1910.157 this junk and not run back into them. That's what love does. You see, Jesus was despised and rejected, but he never despised and rejected in return. Never! Man, he suffered but he uttered no threat. And he says you want to end your race filled with love? Follow my example. I'll keep your heart tender, I'll keep your heart sensitive. You see, I don't think any of us starting our marriage wanting to end our marriage with cold lovelessness. I don't think any of us do.

And yet, where you choose to allow sin to remain, it slowly puts love to death. Beloved, if God so loved us, how ought we to love one another? Let's love for the glory of God. Let me pray.

Father, God, thanks for the fun this morning. Just to enjoy your word. It is so good. It is living, active, sharper than any two-edged sword. Father, I pray that you would take your word, apply it to our hearts that we wouldn't use it as binoculars, but a mirror to see where we have fallen short.

I pray our repentance would lead to humility that flows out in love towards the lost. I pray that we would meet rejection with your love bringing that criticism to you. And Father, that we would be a people that would never repay evil for evil. Would you shed that love of Christ abroad in our hearts so that we might be a people of love in a world that is indifferent and filled with hate?

Would you shine the light of your gospel through us? In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Ending song]

