

Hillside Fellowship Church
November 15, 2020

Captions Provided by:
MAW

[worship]

Pastor Dave: Father, thank you for the reminder that you are truly all we need. You are good, you do good and your nearness to us is our greatest good. And so we confess that, we proclaim that and now let me practice that. As I open your word that you would take your word and apply it to your children through the power of your Spirit and that you would give us your peace that surpasses comprehension. For those of us who are struggling and in the midst of trial, Lord, would you give us grace to see you, the One who is our good.

This world truly has nothing to offer except trouble and pain. And so today, would you remind us of your good plan that you're working out for your glory? Give us that peace that we might love one another as you have loved us so that people might see Christ in us. I pray you'd do this for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, welcome. Really quick, before I get started, a couple of announcements. I think I've only got two. My team may correct me. Number one, go ahead, feel free. Download the new Hillside app. There's a sticker on the seat in front of you that should walk you through how. It should bring together everything that all the different communication forms that you need. You'll get what you need to know about Hillside there. So download the app. Number one.

Number two, we've got another town hall meeting, but townhall meetings are boring. So we're calling the Super Duper Groovy Meeting.

[Chuckling]

That's good, isn't it? I didn't come up with it. The team voted on it. So it's going to be good. Feel free. Wear your bellbottoms, afros, whatever you got from the 70s; polyester is welcome. We're a family; Hillside is. We're being formed in Jesus' image. That takes time and we long to be fruitful. To help facilitate that, we need to look at our facilities. So Alan's going to walk us through that. I hear Alan's going to wear his Bob Ross wig. So you're not going to want to miss it.

[Chuckling]

So come for that. And lastly, newcomers. I've met a bunch of you. Super duper great day to meet newcomers. This is Hillside. We believe Jesus changes everything. He's done that historically through the church. So we've been looking at the book of Acts to see how Jesus went about changing everything. So today we're in Acts 25 and 26. It's one flowing story. Two chapters. 27 minutes. Let's get going.

Acts 26. I'm going to read really, 24 down through 29. This is going to give you the heartbeat of this section. You think Paul's on trial. Then you get to the end of Acts 26 and you realize Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, the commanders and the prominent people are actually the ones on trial. Watch this.

Acts chapter 26, verses 24 through 29. God says, Luke

writes, 24 "While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, 'Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.' 25 But Paul said, 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of (rationality or) sober truth. 26 For the king (Agrippa) knows about these matters (the gospel), and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.' Agrippa replied to Paul, 'In a short time you will persuade me to become a christian.' 29 And Paul said, 'I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.'"

I was going to call this the Queen's Gambit to Tartakower's Defence but I didn't figure anybody would get that. So I'm calling this one the Election Survival Guide Part 2.

[Chuckling]

I'm just going to share with you today how God has used the election to expose things in my heart. Because oftentimes we worry about things that are out there that we have no control over and we ignore the things in here that we are responsible for and we *do* have control over. So there's a big picture.

Let me walk through this passage. Big theological picture, little theological picture, how the gospel bridges that gap, and then I'll walk you through how God used this passage in the election to expose my heart.

So big theological picture. For those of you who aren't Christians, for those of you, in fact, who may not believe in the Bible or God, this book is the Bible. 66 books. 1,196 pages. But it tells one story of a God who created everything good. Sin wrecked it and he is reconciling, restoring it, and when you get to the end of the story in revelation, God wins. And so we celebrate that. That's a big -- that's why Christians are generally in a good mood. Amen?

[Chuckling]

Because we've read it, we know this is the kingdom of darkness and it looks like we're losing, but in the end, God wins. But it's how he wins that's the WOW factor. See, God is sovereign. So if he just dominated and won every day, people get sick and tired of a winner, right? That's why a lot of people don't like Tom Brady.

[Laughter]

I don't. It's like, ah, Patriots. And then when he went to Tampa, I'm like, they're gonna start winning too. Tom. [Raspberry.] Because if you just dominate and win, people dismiss you. It's how God wins that's the WOW factor.

Now the little theological picture. The enemy always looks like he's winning, but he's constantly losing. He's totally insecure, totally overshoots his mark. The Bible tells the gospel. The good news of how Christ Jesus, the light of the world, entered this dark world. He lived a life without sin so that he could die, on a cross, in our place for our sin, taking our sin so that he could conquer death.

He was buried. Then he rose again and now he will give salvation, eternal life, to anyone -- this is how good God is -- to anyone who will come to him and say, I need you. I'm a sinner and I need you. He'll never turn everybody away. And that's the good news of the gospel.

Now, the gospel shows us how God won. It was from a position of weakness, wasn't it? The cradle, the cross, and the coffin all looked weak, and yet, they were all symbols of his power; how he overcame this world.

Now, today I'm going to walk through this text. It's two chapters. Let me make it very simple for you. We're going to start with a problem. Chapter 25, verses 1 through 3. The Jews still want to kill Paul. Right? It's two years later. They're still consumed with killing Paul. That's the problem.

But then we get into chapter 25, verses 4, really through 12, the politics of it. Festus won't make the right decision. He just won't make the right decision. He tries to punt. He wants to do the Jews a favor. So it looks like Paul's in trouble because now this governor, Festus, won't help him. Then we get this long section how God gathers the people.

Festus is like, well, I don't want to make the decision. I want to make Caesar happy. I want to make the Jews happy. He's a consonant politician and God uses that. Paul says, well, then I appeal to Caesar. This whole section is about how God, through Paul, gets the good news to Rome. If I had to sum up chapter 25, 26, how did the gospel get to Rome? Well, in the midst of trouble, trial, tribulation, God moved everything, through corrupt politicians, to get the good news to lost people. Because God loves lost people.

I think this story will best help you out. The year was 1972. How many of you were alive in '72. Okay. That's a lot of you. I wasn't.

[Laughter]

Because I'm super duper young.

[Laughter]

Cold War totally going on. USA versus Russia, right. They were working on the Rocky IV script. It was just going to be intense. 1972, this cat named Bobby Fisher, chess maniac, he made it to the World Chess Championships against Boris Spassky. And it was hyped. It was like USA vs Russia on a chess board. It was game six that I'm specifically talking about.

It was a heated match and it was Fisher's turn to go first. What Fisher played, the USA, the move that he made was utter foolishness and everyone, *everyone* who knew chess who looked at his first move, he moved C4. Everyone who saw his move said, the game's over. It's over before it started. He played the Queen's Gambit. Do you know how foolish that is? No serious chess player had ever played C4, the Queen's Gambit in a World Championship match.

No chess player. No serious chess player had ever played the Queen's Gambit. The game's over. What a dumb move. Bobby Fisher must be throwing the game. Boris Spassky thought the same thing. The Russian thought, I'm going to play Tartakower's Defence. I've never lost playing Tartakower's Defence. It doesn't matter what else the USA

does, I will win. I'm playing Tartakower's Defence. The game started off in utter hopelessness.

If you watch the match, people were mocking Fisher. What a foolish move. He played C4 to Spassky's E6. The game is over before it started. But the rest is history. And I'll wait 'til the end to share it with you.

[Laughter]

What? That's a cliffhanger. In sermonizing, you're supposed to do that to keep attention. But knowing me, I probably won't end with that.

[Laughter]

So you're going to have to Google it up.

[Laughter]

Now watch this. No, I will end with it in 19 minutes. Or more like 30 minutes, but --

[Laughter]

-- it doesn't really matter. Watch this. Watch. God always looks like he's losing but he comes from behind. Watch the problem. I'll read it. 25:1 through 3. Here's the perspective shift that the election has offered me.

1 "Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. 2 And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him (Festus), 3

requesting a concession against Paul, that he (Festus) might have him (Paul) brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, [the Jewish leaders, the leaders of the nation, were] setting an ambush to kill [Paul] on the way)."

This is amazing. How do you become a Jewish leader, a spiritual leader of your nation and have deep murder in your heart? It's been like 30 years since they put Jesus to death, but what's still in their hearts? Murder. It's been two years since Paul was taken away, but what's still in their hearts? Murder.

Here's what the election cycle exposed to me. You realize that within our election system, what it's done is say, it's just a little sin. It's not that big of a deal. When we are angry at the other side, it's just a little anger. It's just a little resentment. It's just a little bitterness. It's just a little hate. What's the worst that can happen? So we sling a little mud.

Let me tell you this. Sin grows. Sin grows. Nobody started out wanting to be a murderer. I can guarantee, the Pharisees didn't used to be the bad guys in the story. They didn't. They were the good guys. They were what you wanted your children to grow up to be. But what happened? A little bitterness, a little anger, a little resentment. You leave that inside and it will consume you. It will kill you. Sin grows.

Have you ever watched Siegfried and Roy? That didn't bring clarity.

[Laughter]

They play with tigers. They used to play with tigers. Right?

Las Vegas. Well, none of us go to Las Vegas. Sin City. A Christian would never go there. But when I was there --

[Laughter]

Yeah. You could go watch them until that fateful night when Roy, Roy Horn, playing with Manticore. He had had that tiger since he was a baby. Seven years he had it. He cared for it. But guess what tigers do. They grow. And that night that Roy was on stage, Manticore attacked him. Dragged him off stage. I mean, just mauled him.

Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you. I would write that down. If we -- no. I would write this down. Genesis 4:7. If you and I only focus on the outside and ignore what's on the inside, we *will* end up on the wrong side. In fact, it will be the dark side. Darth Vader wasn't always Darth Vader, bro. He used to be Anakin.

[Chuckling.]

Well, that one didn't land either.

[Laughter]

But that's my first point. That's my first point. Sin grows. Be very careful. It's not just a little sin. There is no little sin. It will grow, it will consume you and it will kill you. So watch what comes next. 4 through 12 just -- anybody here frustrated with the political cycle, the political system.

[Chuckling]

Okay. Watch this. It's never changed. Our system, our

republic is based on Rome. It's never changed. Politics is politics. Politicians are politicians. I'm going to read this just to save time. Paul was on trial. Festus knew he wasn't guilty, but watch this. Chapter 25, verse 9.

9 "But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, 'Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?' 10 But Paul said, [no] 'I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. 11 If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of these things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to [the Jews.] I appeal to Caesar.'"

You see, politics has always been frustrating. I think our hope and desire is that there would be clarity, simplicity; that justice and righteousness would flow down beautifully; that right judgments and right decisions would be made and we would all rest and be at peace. That's because you were created in a garden, for a garden, with a relationship with a perfect God. That imprinting is still on you. So what you want is good.

Problem. You live in the kingdom of darkness. Government is not God. Stop expecting it to be God. Government is not God. Government is a gift from God. That didn't land. Let me explain it this way. How many have you ever gotten socks for Christmas, or a shirt or pants or any other functional item? Old Spice shampoo, deodorant.

[Chuckling.]

Let me explain this to you. Not every gift is for fun. Some gifts are for functionality. Not every gift is for play. Some are for your preservation and protection. Does that make sense? Government is not a gift for fun and for play. In the kingdom of darkness, government is a gift from God for your preservation. All it does is restrain evil. Is it perfect? No. But I read Lord of the Flies. 1953. William Golding. Anybody read it?

I will take bad, broken, bloated government over no government every day of the week. Festus, you didn't do the right thing. You should've let Paul go. God will use crooked sticks to draw straight lines and he does it here. Festus doesn't let him go because he wants to do the Jews a favor. What does God do? Okay, under the Roman system of government, you can appeal to Caesar. Paul appealed to Caesar and we'll get the gospel to Rome and they'll drive you there.

See, God has always come from behind to win. It's just what he does, y'all. He's so good at it. Politics isn't God. It is a gift from God. Now watch what comes next. His pace, God's pace is painful, amen? So slow. According to my timeline, because I get like 72 years on the earth. So I think everything should be done quick. Watch what God does.

Chapter 25, verse 13 down through 22. You can read this at home. It's just a conversation between Festus and Agrippa. And I don't mean any offense by this. If you're brand new here, I don't mean any sacrilege or irreligiosity, but it's a boring conversation. You read through it and you're like, why would Luke even put this in here? Let me show you. I'm going to start with chapter 25 verse 19.

Festus is trying to explain to Agrippa, he doesn't understand what the problem between the Jews and Paul is. 19 " . . . but they simply had some pointless of disagreement with [Paul] about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive."

You see, what this conversation is, is two non-believers talking to one another trying to understand the gospel. God isn't slow about his promise as some count slowness. But he's patient. He's got a perfect plan. Any apiaries here? Anybody study apiology? Anybody know what apiology is? Apiary.

Member: Birds.

Pastor Dave: Bees. Bee hives. So nobody studied it. Good. I can say whatever I want and you guys will think it's true.

[Laughter]

I love that. That's why I ask questions. How far can I go with this.

[Chuckling.]

I don't like bees. I had a bad experience with a bee. It stung me. I kill bees. Brooke loves bees because bees do things for her backyard garden. Apparently bees are necessary. To me, they're a threat, but they need to be killed. To her, they're essential because they do something. They land on plants, collect pollen and spread pollen. And pollination is essential. But pollination is not exciting, is it? Not in the plant world. Never mind.

[Laughter]

It's not exciting, but it is essential. What you see here is simply pollination. God is incredibly patient towards us. He's not slow about his promise. But he's patient. He loves to do things well. Um . . . how many of you enjoy brisket? Maybe this will -- brisket is probably better than pollen and apiaries. Next sermon? No bees.

[Laughter]

Only brisket. How many enjoy brisket? Good! A lot of Texans. How many are from California and you don't like brisket; you like tofu?

[Laughter]

Nah, that's -- I'm so -- I know. I assume every Californian eat tofu and I don't know why. That's just my own -- I would write this down. In this conversation, it's slow, it's methodical. They're talking and trying to figure out what the issue between Paul and the Jews are.

What's this issue with Jesus? He was dead. Paul says he's alive. Why do they want to kill Paul over that? You see, if you're going to cook a good brisket, it takes time, doesn't it? If you're going to smoke brisket, it takes like an hour a pound to get that bark; that black crust on it. It takes a lot of time. You've gotta be patient to cook brisket.

I would just write this down around this passage. God doesn't use liquid smoke.

[Laughter]

No, serious. Like, he's patient to cook a good brisket and get the good bark on it. He's willing to take time as Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, they're sitting there trying to figure out the gospel. You know it takes some people time to figure out the gospel. We just want them to make a decision now so we can move on and go home and watch our favorite show. It takes people time.

I would also write this down. Patience is not just a virtue. It is an utter necessity for the Christian. You see, Jesus' work takes decades, not days. Centuries, not seconds. And if you're not ready to be patient for the brisket to smoke, you're going to have one tough, nasty piece of meat, bro. You're not going to enjoy it.

So watch what comes next. Not only the pace. Verse 22. Agrippa said to Festus, I would like to hear Paul myself. Isn't that amazing? Listen, I don't understand the gospel fully either. I want to go hear Paul. And Festus says, tomorrow, you shall hear him. Verse 22.

So verse 23. Watch what happens now. God's setting this whole thing up. Paul's on "trial." But watch. It's the way God wins is the WOW factor. It's amazing. Watch verse 23. "So, on the next day when Agrippa . . ."

Does everybody know who Agrippa is? I'm acting like everybody knows. This was Agrippa the 2nd. His full name was Herod Agrippa the 2nd. He was the last of Herodian dynasty. So his great grandpa wanted to kill Jesus. His uncle put John the baptizer to death. His whole family was a total goat rodeo, Gong Show, totally messed up.

The last person that I think deserves the grace of the gospel would be Agrippa. Right next to that, " . . . Agrippa came together with Bernice . . . "

Everybody know who Bernice is? It's Agrippa's sister, but in the Herodian dynasty, because there was so much -- how do I say that? I've got a yellow flag on that one. Psychopathy. They're not well. High, high, high anxiety, fear, paranoia. And so they had family members take members to the prom, if you know what I'm saying.

[Chuckling.]

Agrippa and Bernice were brother and sister but they also went to the prom together.

[Laughter]

If there are two people I don't think deserve the gospel, it would be Agrippa and Bernice. Well, there's kids present, y'all. You're laughing at me like I'm telling a joke.

[Chuckling.]

But you get what I'm saying. Not only Agrippa and Bernice, but then you have Festus. I would say Festus doesn't deserve the gospel. The dude's -- he just doesn't deserve anything good. Watch who else is there. " . . . together with Bernice and great pomp, . . . "

So the pretty people. The Hollywood people. And you know, I don't think the Hollywood people deserve Jesus either. Amen?

[Laughter]

Careful. That was a trick question. Isn't this amazing? Watch. The people that Jesus gathers to hear the gospel. With great pomp. Red carpet. Think Oscars. " . . . and they entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders . . . "

These were the chiliarchs. These would be the generals. They were over the military so they were very powerful. " . . . and the prominent men of the city, . . . "

All the pretty people. This was the Hollywood elite and the mainstream media. Just throw 'em in there, amen?

[Laughter]

All the people that we would say, we don't think they deserve the gospel. Do you know this election cycle -- again, every election cycle teaches me this. But this one did and probably will for the next four years. It's like the pressure ratchets up. Once you come to Christ and your sins are forgiven, you tend to think, I'm pretty good and they're pretty bad. *I* deserve the gospel and Jesus saved *me*. But Hollywood? The elite? The pretty people? The democrats? Mainstream media? They're bad.

Do you know in our political system, it's actually okay now to despise and disdain people. In fact, it's almost a necessity. If I don't despise a group of people, people write me and say, are you with them? You are a Marxist, Dave? Are you a socialist? Are you a communist? Why won't you despise them? Because now it's acceptable, even in Christian

circles, to hate.

And so we'll despise a group. I'm a republican. Lifelong republican. I don't think that surprises anybody. And so our groups of republicans will talk about how ridiculous. We'll despise them, disdain them, dismiss them. They just want -- they're horrible. We demonize them. I don't even see news anymore. When I actually get online to look for news, all I see is demonization of the opposite side. That's not news. That's now who, what, when, where, why and how.

It's Trump's horrible and here's why. McConnell's horrible and here's -- that's not news, y'all. It's okay now to demonize, to destroy, to devour one another, because we can point out where -- man, these people don't deserve the gospel. They're horrible. They do very, very bad things.

Do you understand all of us have a mugshot? I've told you this before. I showed you my police pictures. All of us have a mugshot of very bad things that we've done. But typically, when we become a Christian, we hide that. We hide the mugshot and we'll show everybody our glam shot. I'm very pretty and I'm very good and that's why God loves me. We forget the truth that "there's none righteous. No, not one."

Not one of you were saved because you were a super duper good person. The super duper good people aren't here. We're actually here to say, I was the chief and foremost of all sinners and God showed me grace so that I might be a vehicle, an instrument of grace to other people who deserve it just as little as I did. But I believe God might save them, even as he saved me.

So God pulls these people in. You see, I would write this

down. God could have demonized and destroyed you. You were a sinner. I was. That's why I typically start out my sermons with, hey, my name's Dave. I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic. And God saved me and I have no idea why. He's just that good.

See, God could have demonized and destroyed you for eternity. He chose not to. He chose to demonstrate his love for in "in that while you were yet a sinner, (you were still his enemy) Christ died for you." See, what's helped me a great deal, and I know, I see it. Some of you are frustrated with me. You say, Dave, I just can't support a political party that would -- man, push for it and pay for abortion and all of the different platforms.

Good, I can't support it either. Praise God, God doesn't ask me to support it. He asks me to submit to those he puts in authority over me. He's going to deal with them. You don't have to carry that. He's going to do it. Read through, write down, Romans chapter 13, verses 1 and 2. "Let all of us submit ourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution for there is no authority except from God. And whatever authority is there has been appointed by God for his glory."

He saves wretched sinners, amen?

Member: Amen.

Pastor Dave: Well, that. I don't know. He saves horrible people, amen?

Members: Amen.

Pastor Dave: You see, we may have to spend some time

looking at different sins so we can just all own our own sin and be amazed that he saved us. I'm amazed that he saved me and I hope you're amazed that he saved you. And I'm amazed he continues to save wretched people like, verse 23, Agrippa, Bernice. God so loved this world, he sent his Son to save sinners.

I hope that you never get tired of it. Now, I've got 31 seconds to go through an entire chapter.

[Chuckling.]

Everybody just put on your imaginary seatbelts. This is going to be like the Steel Eel. You ready, Jay. Man, John and I rode the Steel Eel. Never again. We're not going to do that again. But this is going to be like that. Watch. We now get into the presentation of Paul's persuasion. How Paul persuades. I'm about to explain everything in our society and social system that kills our families, kills our marriages, kills our relationships.

What Paul does in 26, and I want you to go home and spend time reading through chapter 26. What Paul is about to do is brilliant. I really think, as he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, he learned the Socratic method of persuasion. Let me tell you. You only have two ways to persuade. Persuasion is incredibly complex if you've studied logic, reason, rhetoric. Persuading someone is very hard.

Have you ever tried to persuade your spouse of anything?

[Chuckling]

Okay. It's very difficult. Because of the enlightenment, we

think if we just have the data, everyone will agree with us. The problem is, in a post-modern world, we don't share the same data. We don't even agree. When somebody says "experts" I laugh. Because we don't even know what that means anymore. That could mean they had a dream. That could mean they graduated kindergarten. Expert doesn't mean anything.

So what Socrates did, he came up and he said, the art of persuasion is very complex. It involves ethos, pathos and logos. Your ethic, your character, ethos. Pathos, your ability to connect and have compassion with another. And logos, the content of the message. And Socrates, in rhetoric, would go through and say, you've got to have these three things woven together in order to persuade and that persuasion is going to take time.

So you either have ethos, logos and pathos or you're going to use something else. And this is what our world system uses. You ready for it? If you don't use ethos, pathos and logos, your character, compassion and connection and your content, if you don't use those things, guess what you're going to use? It's a Greek word. It's not ethos, logos and pathos. It's Phobos. Fear, anxiety, panic, stress and worry.

Because you can either convince someone through the totality of who you are or you can just scare the . . . crude out of them.

[Chuckling]

Got a yellow flag. You can scare them really bad and steer their direction. In our world, all we use; fear, anxiety, panic, stress and worry, which has really good short-term results,

but leads to long-term ruin. Because anxiety, panic, fear, stress and worry will kill your marriage, will kill your family, will kill your community and ultimately kill your country.

Watch what Paul does here. I'm just going to show you in the next five minutes how Paul uses ethos, logos and pathos and I'm going to tell you this election cycle has taught me; be careful about using fear, anxiety, panic, stress and worry to win people over. Because in winning them over, you may create a wasteland of a nation.

Watch what Paul uses. He starts out his persuasive speech, and it's just like the one he gave before and the one he gave before. It's his story. Your story matters. Chapter 26, verse 1 "So Agrippa said to Paul, 'You're permitted to speak for yourself.' Then Paul stretched out his hand . . . "

Now watch what he says. I'm going to straight to verses 4 and 5. He starts out with ethic. Ethos. 4 "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, . . . "

They've watched me for a long time.

". . . which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem, 5 since they have know about me for a long time, . . . "

How long does it take to persuade someone? A long time. This is about your ethos, your character. This is why who you are matters. You know the messenger of the gospel in his or her life -- your life matters. What God did was intertwine your life with the advancement of the gospel so that people can watch me. They can literally watch me in my life as I keep my behavior excellent amount the gentiles; as I

let my light shine as they watch me with John and Ella and Brooke and Kate and Paxton, and they watch *us*, our family with our neighbors and in our neighborhood, and they watch us with you. That ethic is the platform on which the gospel is presented.

Your character matters. You see, it's not just a little sin. You want to know why -- people ask me -- I don't have time for this. I'm so frustrated. Why don't you do an alter call? We live in this world and the church is driven by business principles. It started in the 20s. Always be closing. ABCs. You use anxiety and fear and stress. You're going to hell! You're going to hell! You're bad unless you come up. And we use fear instead of character, conduct, connection and the content of the gospel.

Why I don't? Because fear has great short-term results, but it leads to horrific resentment. People say why do so many people leave the church? Because we used fear, anxiety, panic, stress and worry to create a short-term result and we didn't say, follow me as I follow Christ. Watch me love Brooke. Watch me fail as a dad and make it up with John and Ella. Watch me spend time with the hurting and broken. If you don't know someone's character and their conduct, you don't know their ethic, you're likely to dismiss their message.

The messenger of the gospel matters. Paul started out and said, you've watched me since I was a child. Now watch what comes next. Watch this. Verse 12 through 24. Not only does the ethic, the character of your life matter, the content of your message -- Paul would call it the *logos*. Socrates would call it the *logos*.

Verse 19. "So King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision but kept declaring to both those of Damascus first and also those of Jerusalem and then throughout all the region in Judea and even to the gentiles that they should repent. Turn to God performing deeds appropriate with repentance. For this reason, some of the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.

22 So having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to the small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; 23 that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the gentiles."

Not only does your character matter, but the content of what we're sharing matters. The gospel matters, that people might know, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And that's made this world a mess. But Christ Jesus suffered greatly and died in our place for our sin, removing sin, removing shame, removing guilt and giving us his righteousness freely, by grace through faith in Him, and that Christ Jesus rose again.

That's the gospel in a nutshell. That offers salvation unto eternal life. How to's, self-help will never change a heart. The content matters. So ethos, logos, and watch the pathos. Do you know -- I don't have time to go through the social sciences of it -- if you like someone, just emotionally, if you like someone, you're predisposed to believe their message. And if you dislike someone, if someone has been a jerk to you, you're predisposed to dismiss their message even if they have super duper facts.

You're like, well, I don't like them. They're a jerk-face. Therefore, I'll just dismiss it. And in a post-modern world, that's okay. Apparently we can do that. Watch what happens here. I want you to see not only Paul's ethic, you've seen my character, not only the logos, here's the content. Watch what happens here because it's his connection. Paul actually has put them on trial now.

And I think Festus gets what Paul's doing. See, Festus has to have something to write to Caesar. So Festus is on a fact-finding mission. He's got to get the gospel spot on because that's what Paul's on trial for. So Paul is now has got a captive audience. He's got everyone listening to him and he's explaining the gospel to them so they might understand. And I think Festus gets what's going on here and he realizes, I'm on trial.

So he stops Paul. Verse 24, "While Paul was saying this in his own defense, Festus said in a loud voice, 'Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.' 25 But Paul said, 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth (or rationality in the greek).'"

And Paul knows he's got Festus right where he wants him. In verse 26. King Agrippa grew up with this stuff. King Agrippa grew up with the Jews. King Agrippa knows all of this. 26 "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner."

Jesus turned Judea upsidedown with his miracles. And Festus knew it. Now Agrippa -- and Paul puts Agrippa on

trial. Watch verse 27. "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets?" Do you believe the Bible? Paul already knew he did. He says, "I know that you do." 28 And Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

Do you think you can change my mind with one presentation of the gospel? Now he's got everyone. He's got the king, he's got the governor, he's got Agrippa, Bernice, the generals, the commanders, he's got all of the prominent people and they're like, wait a minute. Agrippa, you know about this? So now Agrippa's going to have to testify to the gospel because he saw it all.

And Paul says this. Watch how he connects. 29 "And Paul said, 'I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you (Agrippa), but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for . . .'" What?

He tells a joke, y'all. You know, if you look at it and you look at the passage, you end, and you realize what he's doing. He's a brilliant orator. And what he did was drew everybody in and said, short time, long time, Agrippa. It doesn't matter. I wish that everybody would follow Jesus and be exactly as I am. Well, except for one thing. These chains. And I can guarantee ya, everybody laughed.

You see, it's not only your character that matters and it's not only the content of your message, but your ability to connect and have compassion with people. Paul had that and he drew them in. You see, what Jesus does here is amazing, because he's, from a position of weakness, changing everything. This is what God does.

I would say this. When you look at ethos, logos and pathos, please remember -- and the election cycle has reminded me of this -- Jesus didn't leave me and say, Dave, you go win elections. I read the whole thing, y'all. I read it. I've read it numerous times. I've worked through a lot of it. Nowhere does it say, go win elections. Nowhere does it say, Dave, go win arguments. Be so super duper smart that, intellectually, you can wrap people up and be like, ah! Got you. I intellectually owned you.

He doesn't say go win elections or go win arguments. He says, go win souls. Make disciples. And to do that, your character must be excellent. It's not okay to hate. Love your enemy. Pray for those who persecute you. That's not a suggestion, Hillside. That's a command that Jesus left us. Your character must be excellent. The content of the message, "I sought to know nothing among you except Christ crucified and Christ resurrected."

You want to argue about anything else? I'll listen but I've got no passion for that. And your compassion and ability to connect, it matters. You see, this is how Jesus is changing everything. It was 1972, and Bobby Fisher played C4. The Queen's Gambit Declined to Boris Spassky's E6, Tartakower's defence and everybody watched. And they mocked Bobby Fisher's each move. What is he doing? This is horrible. We're going to lose. He's going to lose. Russia's going to show that they're more powerful.

As the game went on, the critics began being silenced because they could see Spassky's body language change. See, he had never lost to Tartakower's defence. Never! Never once! He had one every single match playing that defence. And Bobby Fisher had never won one game with

Queen's Gambit Declined. Nobody had won a game with Queen's Gambit Declined. It's foolishness!

In the 1800s, they said, this is no more. But Bobby Fisher had studied and he knew every move, every move! By the end of the match, by the end of that sixth match when Bobby Fisher dominated Boris Spassky, the entire room stood and applauded. Even Bobby Fisher's opponent, Boris Spassky pushed his chair back and gave a standing applause and said, that was the first perfect game of chess that's ever been played in the history of the world.

His enemy gave him a standing applause. In this world, you may not understand the chess moves God is making. You may not understand every move. It may seem like foolishness. It may seem like Queen's Gambit Declined. Utter foolishness! You may not understand every move, but know this. One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess and even his enemies will say, that was the most perfect story ever written. That's his story and that's your story if you're in Christ.

Let's pray. Father, God, thank you so much that you've given us truth and life and goodness and hope and love in this kingdom of darkness. Yet, even though now, oftentimes I don't understand the moves you're making. Father, would you give me grace to trust your hand when I don't understand? Knowing that one day, all of those moves on that board will become very clear and I believe that every knee is going to bow and celebrate you as the greatest chess player of all time. That you've written the perfect story.

Until then, would you allow our character, our conduct, the content of our message to be the purity of the gospel and for

us to connect and have compassion for a world that's hurting and lost? Would you help us not to hate our enemies, but to love our enemies so that they might see your love for them through us? Would you do that for your glory in and through us? In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Ending song]