

Logos, Ethos and Pathos in Preaching and Writing

A Reflection on Preaching and Persuasion

Reflections Reflections WhatsApp post, 22 January 2025

Galatians 4:17-20 (referenced)

We recently held a brief workshop on preaching at our church. These sessions often reveal key principles of preaching that even experienced preachers might overlook. Since the workshop, I have been reflecting on whether we addressed all the important concepts or not. I enjoy reading Martin Luther's sermons, even though they came much later in the church's history. This led me to consider the preaching of Paul, who was an extraordinarily compelling preacher with a highly persuasive and motivating style.

Contemporary preaching generally focuses on educating believers about applying scripture in their lives. While some preachers may occasionally make minor doctrinal errors or preach for too long, and others attempt to showcase their biblical knowledge by jumping from Genesis to Revelation, we typically accept their sermons. Paul, however, faced a completely different and challenging situation. As people from diverse cultural backgrounds came to Christianity, false teachers were misleading many of the vulnerable. Paul effectively conveyed the truth about Christ using three essential attributes: logos, ethos, and pathos. He often avoided direct confrontation, opting instead for indirect debate with these false teachers, as seen in Galatians 4:17-20.

Paul's arguments relied on logos—logic, ethos—credibility, and pathos—emotion. If you are wondering how to incorporate these vital elements into a sermon (or even in business presentations), I would advise you to preach from your heart and not just recite what you have learnt. Ensure that every single aspect of your sermon aligns with your personal beliefs. By doing this, you will naturally address the logic and credibility of your message.

The way you deliver your message is also important, which brings in the element of pathos. Many preachers alter their vocal tone for dramatic effect, but incorporating genuine emotion into your delivery is a more effective approach for conveying a good sermon. This principle applies equally to your writing as well.

These are some stray thoughts for you to reflect on.

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