***“Contend for the faith….”* and the inerrancy of the The Bible**

[Jude 1:3-8](https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/scripture/sermons-on-jude-13-8/?keyword=Jude+1%3A3-8&ref=SermonPrint); Isaiah 55:10-11; 2 Timothy 3:10-17; Matthew 5:17-20 February 25, 2018

 As I’ve said several times before, we don’t have to apologize for our faith. We don’t need to rally to God’s defense. Our God is bigger than we are – and doesn’t really need our help. But in spite of that… God calls us to contend for the faith.

 One of the tools God has given us to contend for the faith is the Bible. Charles Spurgeon once spoke of Scripture this way: "Defend the Bible? I would just as soon defend a lion. Just turn the Bible loose. It will defend itself." It’s a powerful book that is THE main weapon we have in contending for the faith.

 Because of the power Scripture has to do that, I’ve discovered over the years that there are people out here who seemingly do everything they can to undermine the Bible. God’s Word gets in the way of things that they want to believe or do and so even those who want to think of themselves as Christians say things to try to justify themselves and their sin. I mean, it’s the same thing the devil said in the very beginning, “God didn’t say you will surely die.”

 And so something I’ve heard said a lot these days is this**: “Paul said it… but Jesus didn’t.”** What are they talking about? What are they trying to defend?

 This is a very common claim by those of the LGBT movement. They claim that Jesus didn’t condemn the gay lifestyle, that it was only later, specifically the Apostle Pau who condemned homosexuality. They reference what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth which was experiencing a lot of sexual misconduct and what he said in his letter, **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**: *“do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”*

 And so to them Paul is a misogynist and bigot, discriminating against the gay person. I must point out that there are other sins condemned here as well. I call them the **controlling sins** that are hard to break free from, and which if they are not repented of and turned away from, will destroy the hope of salvation. Yes, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers are included right along with the homosexual and sexually immoral, which is quite a wide category. So they say, Paul said it, but Jesus didn’t, and they often use the woman caught in adultery in **John 8** as another way of justifying their claim, “See, Jesus let her go.” Jesus did say, *“Go and sin no more.”*

 Now what they don’t want to hear, and I know this personally because I have brought this next verse to the attention of a gay person before, *“*is verse **11 of 1 Corinthians 6**: *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* Wow! Now that is pure Gospel! Paul is telling them right there, that no matter what kind of **controlling sin** a person is caught in, that freedom comes in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. It boils down to this. If they don’t want to change the Holy Spirit will oblige. Like I’ve said many times before the Holy Spirit is a gentleman, he will not force himself on you, you need to be open to the Holy Spirit and invite him in to help break the bondage of **controlling sins.**

 Now I can understand an unbeliever, and atheist or an agnostic trying justsify their sinful lifestyle by this interpretation of the Scriptures – they don’t like God anyway and they have no love for His book – but I have a real problem with “religious folks” who do this. There are people or some preachers or even “Bible scholars” I’ve encountered who do exactly the same thing. As a matter of fact some of the denominations in this country have given their full approval to it.

 These “Christians” really annoy me. No they anger me. I despise them for what they try to do to the Bible. They are false teachers.

 Why? Because everything we know about God and what He’s done for us is in this book. Everything we know about what He expects of us and how He works in our lives is in this book. Everything we know about Jesus and what He said and did and how He came down to earth and became a man and faced the cross and rose from the dead is in this book. If I can’t rely on part of the Bible to be trustworthy, how will I know that ANY of it is dependable? How do I know that Jesus was really who He said He was and that He actually died for my sins?

 The theological problem we are addressing here is known as the **verbal inspiration of the Scripture** and we define it like this, that **the Bible is true and without error as recorded in the original manuscripts.** Now of course we don’t have the original manuscripts today, we have thousands of copies, made long before copy machines, done by human hands that can easily make little errors in copying a text. These are what we call textual errors and in seminary we learn the process of identifying them in the original Greek and Hebrew. Our standard work is the Greek testament which has all of those copying errors noted at the bottom of nearly every page. But none of the doctrines of the Christian faith are affected by these simple copying errors.

 Now, let me go on record here - I trust the entire Bible. I can be wrong, but the Bible is NEVER wrong. In my seminary studies we had a whole semester course on this topic so just let me say here that there is way too much information for me to cover this morning. Just let me say that you can trust the Bible too.

 **Did you realize that that’s what Jesus believed?** He believed the Bible was never wrong. In His final earthly prayer Jesus prayed that the Father would *“Sanctify (His followers) through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* **John 17:17**

 In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”* **Matthew 5:17-18**

 And when tempted by Satan in the desert do you remember the phrase he kept repeating? *“IT IS WRITTEN”* **Matthew 4:4, 6, and 11**

 Why didn’t Jesus just tell Satan “I say unto you” or “I believe” or “In my opinion?” After all, Jesus was God – His opinion was as good as anything ever written in Scripture. But Jesus repeated “*It is written”* so that we might realize that He was trusting in the very book we’ve been given and if “*it was written*” was good enough for Him, it should be good enough for us.

 The New Testament writers drove that point home as well. Paul wrote: *“ALL Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”* **2 Timothy 3:16**

 And Peter wrote: *“no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* **2 Peter 1:21**

 Someone once noted that the Bible

• was composed by 40 different authors over a period of 1500 years and yet it has a marvelous singlemindedness and unity to its message. And the message is this: Because man has sinned - God worked down through history to bring about the coming of the Messiah who would save us from our sins.

• In addition, the Bible has claimed to be the Word of God over 2700 times.

• It contains over 300 fulfilled prophecies concerning the person and work of Jesus and it has numerous other prophecies that have been fulfilled about various men and nations down thru history.

• The Bible does not contradict one proven scientific or historical fact.

• It does not contain one absolute contradiction. But instead Scripture has been the “roadmap” for 1000s of archaeological discoveries and has never been wrong once.

• And it has transformed the lives of millions of people who have loved its promises.

ILLUS: Just to give you an idea of how accurate Scripture is, let me tell you **the story of Jericho**. Of course you remember what the Bible tells us about how the Joshua and the Israelites took that city. It was a formidable walled city, perhaps the most impregnable city in all Palestine.

 Now walled cities were usually conquered in one of two ways. The enemy either broke the wall inward with battering rams, or they simply waited outside until folks inside ran out of food and water, which usually took a long period of time.

 But Scripture tells us Jericho fell in a mere 7 days. The first day, the Israelites marched once around the city. And the 2nd day they marched once around the city. And the 3rd day, and the 4th day, and the 5th day and the 6th day they marched once around the city.

 But on the 7th day, they marched around it 7 times and then the priests blew their trumpets, and the people shouted and "The wall came a-tumblin down". And when that happened the people then rushed into the city and burned everything… just as God commanded.

 For centuries scoffers and skeptics mocked this story as just one more of the fantastic impossible stories out of Scripture. I mean - the very idea that a walled city would collapse like that – it just wasn’t feasible.

 Well… then somebody dug the place up. Beginning in the 1920s archeologists began excavating the site, and this is what they found:

1. Jericho had a double wall, with houses built across the two walls. This explained how Rahab's house could have been built upon the wall.

2. They learned that the wall had been destroyed by a violent convulsion such as the one described in the Bible, and that when the wall fell - it fell outward - down the hillside.

3. And buried beneath a heavy layer of soot (suggesting the city was burned) they found many bushels of grain (which meant the city fell after a short siege).

(Time March 5, 1990 [http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,969538,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C969538%2C00.html) )

 <http://www.israel-a-history-of.com/jericho-archaeology.html>

And that’s just ONE of the many stories archeologists have proven to be true from Scripture.

 But the Bible is more than just an “accurate” set of stories. **It’s very words have a powerful influence on people.** Hebrews tells us that “*the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* **Hebrews 4:12**

 God said much the same thing back in the Old Testament: “*as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”* **Isaiah 55:10-11**

 The Bible repeatedly presents itself as an almost mystical and mighty tool. It is so mighty, in fact, that Spurgeon’s words are right on the mark: “Just turn the Bible loose. It will defend itself.”

 But the Bible can do more than just defend itself. Scripture has the power in its words to transform the minds and hearts of unrepentant men and women and to transform the lives of those who are broken and shattered.

 You see, THAT is the power of the book we call the Bible. Everything we know about Jesus and His forgiveness and His mercy are found in this book. The words of Scripture are GOD BREATHED and have the power to change lives from sin and shame to life and joy. So, if you’re going to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints you have got to realize that THIS IS THE book, and this book is trustworthy. And this book gives you the advantage in a world that would mock your faith.

 Now, as I said earlier, there are folks who don’t like our Bible. They most often oppose it because of their sin, or their pride or their doubt.

 There are folks who oppose it because it condemns their lifestyle. There’s the story a friend of W. C. Fields who walked into the actor’s dressing room and caught him reading the Bible. Fields was a notoriously sinful man but he seemed embarrassed and quickly shut the book. He looked at his friend and said "Just looking for loopholes." (Christianity Today)

 Jude says “*For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God INTO SENSUALITY and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”* Jude 1:4

 Other people pervert and reject Scripture because of their pride. Opposing God allows them to create a following. That’s why many professors at secular universities do everything in their power to undermine the faith of their students. As long as the Bible has any chance of controlling the minds and hearts of those pupils, the professors have a hard time reshaping and reforming their brains in their image.

 Paul warned the Elders at Miletus: *“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”* **Acts 20:29-30**

And then there are others who simply don’t trust God…

• Their God’s not big enough to create the world in 7 days.

• Their God’s not big enough to create a worldwide flood.

• Their God’s not big enough to part the sea so His people can cross on dry land.

• Their God’s not big enough to bring down the walls of Jericho, or to protect His people in the Lion’s Den or in the Fiery Furnace.

• You have to wonder if their God is even big at all. If their God is big enough to come down out of heaven, go to cross for our sins and rise from the dead to conquer death itself.

 I believe ALL that stuff because – it’s in the book! And I believe all that stuff because my God is big enough to do all that – and more. If it’s in the book you can take it to the bank… because it’s true.

CLOSE: A true story of a missionary to the Fiji Islands.

 James Calvert (1813-1892) was a zealous missionary to cannibals on the Fiji Islands. His faithful work bore fruit in the lives of those accustomed to taking the life of others. Years later an English earl visited the Fiji Islands and was critical of a chief’s conversion to Christianity. "You’re a great leader but it’s a pity you’ve been taken in by those foreign missionaries. No one believes the Bible anymore. People are tired of the threadbare story of Christ dying on a cross for the sins of mankind. They know better now. I’m sorry you’ve been so foolish as to accept their story."

 The old chief responded with a gleam in his eyes, "See that great rock over there? On it we smashed the heads of our victims. Notice the furnace next to it. In that oven we formerly roasted the bodies of our enemies. If it hadn’t been for those good missionaries and the love of Jesus that changed us from Cannibals into Christians, you’d never leave this place! You’d better thank the Lord for the Gospel, otherwise we’d already be feasting on you. If it weren’t for the Bible and its salvation message, you’d now be our supper!" (quoted in Autoillustrator.com , "SPIRITUAL GRATITUDE" from, Kindred Spirit, Volume 16, Number 1, p. 6)

 We have a supper to attend to today. It’s called the Lord’s Supper because Jesus himself instituted it and told us to repeat it often.

**Prayer:** Lord God, impress upon our hearts the whole truth of the Bible. Amen.