

Sunday Sermon

4/21/24

Series: God-Breathed

Passage: Is. 40:8

Title: Evidence (Part 1) – External

Good morning, church! It's good to be back with you all this morning. This past weekend I was suffering for Jesus in Myrtle Beach. Many of you know the McCarthy family. Josh McCarthy got married to a wonderful young woman, and I was honored to be a part of that.

If you have your bibles this morning, please open to 2 Tim. 3:16. If you are visiting this morning welcome. I am glad you're here. You have picked a good week to come to PCC as we are starting a new series on the Bible, the Word of God, which we've titled "God-Breathed."

Listen: Every week, we come to church. We worship the God who is revealed to us in the pages of this book. We hear a message from a book we claim has authority in our lives. We claim it contains within its pages the very words and the capital T truth of God Almighty. We claim this book is the Word of God and that all truth about God, about salvation, and about the lives we now are to live, those things are standardized from this book.

It begs the question: Is this God's book and how do we know? I've had so many conversations with people over the past several months about this. Can we be confident that it is what it claims to be? I believe the answer to those questions is yes. And the intent of this series is to begin to build for us a foundation on which we can stand confident that God wrote a book, that this is a unique supernatural book, that God wants to be found, that we can trust him and what he says as we would trust a friend, and that what we have in the Bible is his uncompromised Word.

"God-Breathed" a title that comes from 2 Timothy 3:16 when Paul writes, "All scripture is "theopneustos" – a compound word "God-breathed". ***"All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."***

And with that, I've subtitled the series: ***Why I believe the Bible***. My goal with this series is not to convince you of something, it's to present you with evidence concerning the issue of the Bible being God's book. Now typically we teach through a text of scripture, I'm going to do something different this morning and I hope you would give me the grace to do so. Instead, I'm going to begin to give you the evidence about "Why I believe the Bible." So before we jump in this morning, let's pray together.

To begin, let's talk about some of the misconceptions that people have about the bible. Family Feud style: Top five reasons on the board.

**Name a common excuse or reason that people give for not believing the bible:**

5. It's just a bunch of stories (Noah's Ark, Jonah and the Whale, David and Goliath, Jesus)

4. It's just written by man – a bunch of men wrote that book, God didn't write that.
3. I have my own source of truth – when I want to know what's true about spiritual things, I go down to my basement and sit cross-legged and hum. And I just figure stuff out.
2. It's too old to be relevant – I don't read parenting manuals from the 50's, car repair books from the 20's, and I don't read books that are 2000 years old. That thing is old man! And it isn't scientific.
1. It's filled with contradictions. It can't even keep its own matters straight.

If you've talked with people about the Bible, I'm sure you've heard one or all of those things. Now hear this, none of those are true. The Bible is not just a bunch of stories. It's a historical document of events that really happened – I'm going to talk more about that in a moment.

The bible was not written by men. Yes, God used men, but the Bible was written by God. God is the one that inspired or breathed out the scriptures – we are going to spend a whole week on that one.

3. If you have your own source of truth, let me give you some counsel. The only reason truth is truth is because it comes from a source higher than ourselves. The Bible points us true north. It's a very, very bad plan to show up in heaven some day and say "I bagged God's Word and just tried to figure things out myself." Very bad plan.
2. It's too old. I'm going to talk about that exact thing the next week. Not true.
1. We'll get into contradictions next week as well, but I can tell you absolutely that the Bible is NOT filled with contradictions. I've read the whole thing.

Now full disclaimer, as I was compiling the message there was so much to be said concerning the evidence for the Word of God that I had to split it into two weeks. So this week we'll be looking at just some of the external evidence - evidence that has nothing to do with what's in the book, just general evidence for the authority of scripture and the fact that it's a unique, supernatural book - and then next week we'll look at the internal evidence - evidence from within the bible itself – as well as the experiential evidence – or how the bible impacts us as the proof that it is not just another book. Got it?

So as we jump into external evidence, let me read to you a passage of scripture. Is. 40:8 says, ***"The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever."***

And if this is a supernatural book, if it is really a book written by the Creator of the Universe, then it should stand alone among all other books. It seems to me that if God wrote a book, that he is going to keep it from slipping into obscurity and he's going to make sure that his book is always like top shelf, top drawer, out front all the time.

So let's begin with the facts.

### **1. External Evidence: The Bible's preeminence among all literature.**

Stack all the book of all time on top of one another, but don't even put the Bible on the top of the stack. Put the bible in a separate pile all by itself because it is not even able to be compared.

### **1. *The bible is preeminent in its circulation.***

The bible has been read by more people in more languages than any other book in human history BY FAR. According to Wycliffe Global, as of Sept 2023, 736 times the bible has been translated in its entirety into different languages.

Portions of the bible have been translated into an additional 2,922 different languages. In fact, people have gone out repeatedly into places where the language was not previously known, learned the language with the express purpose of translating the bible into it, and now everything we know about that people group, we know because the bible now exists in a portion, or as a whole, in their language. 3,658 different languages. No other book comes close. Second place? A French book entitled “The Little Prince” which has yet to hit 500, The closest religious writing? The Book of Mormon/Quran – 115. Seems to me that if I were God, I’d want to reveal my word to all humanity.

The bible is preeminent in its circulation. That’s languages, how about numbers. In the 1970’s, the British Bible Society, in order to meet its demands had to publish a bible every 3 seconds.

2023 statistics show that today, with all the spiritual degradation of culture, an average of 100 million bibles are still printed annually, 6.34 bibles being sold, people buying bibles, every 10 seconds. And in addition to that, 115,000 + bibles being given away every single day. No other book comes close to that. Second best seller in 2023? “It Ends with Us” – Colleen Hoover - 1.29 million copies. And it’ll be different next year. The bible beats it 100-fold every single year. This is like “write it off. Next subject please.”

### **2. *The bible is preeminent in its influence.***

Listen: no other book comes close in influencing human history like the bible. More books have been written about the Bible, more books quote the Bible, more books have been written to assist in studying the Bible. American theologian Bernard Ramm says this, **“From the apostolic fathers dating from A.D. 95-modern times there is one great literary river streaming from the bible - bible dictionaries, bible encyclopedias, bible lexicons, and atlases and geographies. These may be taken as a starter. Then at random we may mention the vast bibliographies around theology, biblical education, hymnology, missions, the biblical languages, church history, religious biographies, devotional works, commentaries, philosophy of religion, evidences, apologetics and on and on. An endless stream of writing all in response to people facing up to and dealing with God’s book.”**

It's amazing when you think about it. The bible is preeminent in its influence. But you say wait a minute. There are other books that are written about God. What about all those other religious writings. What about all those eastern books? What about the Quran, or the Veda, or the Tripitaka?

Well, Monier Williams, who was the Boden professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University – he was originally from India so he was immersed in the Hindu culture. Just a scholar, that's all whose works included *Indian Wisdom, Hinduism, Buddhism in its Connexion with Brahmanism and Hinduism, and in its contrast with Christianity*. He spent 42 years studying eastern books, and in comparing the eastern books with the bible concluded this, **“Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table, but place the bible on the right side all by itself, all alone. And with a wide gap between them, for there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the east which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever – a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science or religious thought.”**

Listen: Lots of people have written books about God, but God only wrote one book, **and it is preeminent among all literature**. That's the first evidence, the second is...

## **2. The Bible's supernatural preservation against attack.**

### ***First is in its preservation against the attack of people***

Look up here for a minute. It almost goes without saying that the bible is always and forever under attack – in ways that no other book is. No book has been so burned, and banned, and outlawed, and mocked as the bible. There are many people, men and women, who have given themselves throughout human history to reinterpret, discredit, or even try to wipe God's Word from the face of the earth. Listen: The bible could not exist today if it were not God's book and if he has not been supernaturally preserving it.

One example, the noted French infidel, Voltaire. A prolific writer and philosopher during the enlightenment, he gave his life in France for the eradication of all Christianity. In fact, he was quoted as saying, he died in 1778, and he was quoted as saying, **“Within 100 years of my death, Christianity will have been swept from existence and have passed into history.”**

But what happened? Voltaire has passed into history while the circulation of the bible has continued to increase, carrying blessing wherever it goes. And this is humorous, only 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society purchased Voltaire's house in France and used his own printing press to produce stacks of bibles.

Now that's just an irony of human history, but please understand, the bible has been preserved by almighty God.

That's an example of the bible's preservation against the attack of people, how about its ***preservation against the attack of time***. The Bible is not the only old book. And there are several subject matters that come up when you're trying to determine the reliability of a book. We want to know when we pick up this book: Is this book really an accurate representation of what was originally written? Sure, OK, God wrote a book, but is this it?

And there are three issues that come up as we try to discern if we still have a faithful representation of God's Word.

The first one is the **number of manuscripts**. Before the printing press, God's Word was written and copied and copied and copied and copied by hand. All books were. And so it begs this question. How many manuscripts do we really have?

Second issue is: among the manuscripts that we do have, **do they agree?** Because if one says that the book of Genesis this and another one says it's this and they don't agree, we begin to wonder, well, which one is really God's Word?

The third issue is one of **time**. **How much time** is there between the original writing of the individual book in the Bible and the manuscripts we have? What's the gap? Because if I were to tell you that the oldest manuscript we have of the Bible is from 1974. That'd be a bit scary. We'd be thinking, "whoa, quite a gap there. Wonder what happened between what we have and what was originally written."

So let's look at the evidence. First of all, in regard to the number of manuscripts. There are in existence more than 5,800 known Greek manuscripts, over 10,000 very old Latin manuscripts, and more than 9,300 other early versions of the NT. Listen: we have more than 25,000 manuscripts, copies, or portions of the New Testament in existence today.

"25,000," you say, "Well, can you like, compare that to something?" Sure. Second place goes to a book called Homer's Iliad - a book of poetry by this guy that lived in 500 BC. 25,000 copies of the New Testament. Various portions. How many copies do we have of Homer's Iliad? 643. That's second place. Now, if you were to drive down to the University of Rochester and show up there in the ancient literature department and say, I don't believe in the reality of the text of Homer's Iliad, there's not enough manuscripts. They would laugh you out of the building.

643 is a lot. But how can those same scholars turn around and criticize the text of God's Word when he has preserved 25,000 manuscripts in the New Testament? Let me tell you, we can have a lot of confidence when we hold this book in our hand.

You say, well, what happens when they take those manuscripts and compare them? If they put all these 25,000 manuscripts down on a table and they start comparing them to one another. Do they really agree or is there been a lot of deterioration? Are they not really the same?

Sir Frederick Kenyon, one of the greatest authorities in the field of New Testament textual criticism, has said this, "**There is no fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith that rests on a disputed reading. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain, especially is the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some form or another. This can be said of no other book in the world.**"

That's why this book is so unique. This is God's book, and God has preserved it. But we might say, "That's the New Testament. What about the Old Testament?"

And well, you know, for years, people used to question the Old Testament. Listen, for years the oldest copy of the Old Testament we had was dated 900AD. And it was a concern. And people would say, "Ohh, all that stuff in Isaiah that talks about Jesus that was really written after Jesus was born. Isaiah 53, all we like sheep have gone astray. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. All those prophecies. Somebody wrote that after Jesus was born and slipped it in." Well, for years there wasn't the evidence.

Then in 1947, they found the Dead Sea Scrolls. 40,000 manuscripts, 1000 years older than anything they had ever seen before. And people were wondering, "What are we going to find out about the Old Testament?" All the guys who for years had criticized the Old Testament and said the text was greatly corrupted, that it wasn't what it used to be, that it had changed over time.

One of the things they found in the Dead Sea Scrolls was an entire copy of the book of Isaiah. 1000 years older than any copy they've ever had before. Let me just read to you what they wrote about what they found concerning Isaiah 53. Listen to this, **"Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only 17 letters in question after 1000 years"** (of copy and recopy and recopy and recopy and recopy) **"...Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four are stylistic changes. The remaining 3 letters comprise only one word, the word 'light,' which is added in verse 11, and it doesn't even affect the meaning of the text. Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word of three letters in question after 1000 years of transmission, and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage."** God has preserved his word. Listen, God Almighty wrote a book. And as men were and women were copying and recopying and recopying, he was guiding their pens and making sure, like no other book in human history by far, that we could hold in our hands the uncorrupted, unadulterated, uncompromised Word of God.

And we don't have time to get into it this morning, but let me add to that this. Under this section of the external evidence for the Bible: its preeminence among literature, its preservation against attack, is the **Proof from Archaeology** that we have. Complex governmental systems, written languages, the existence of lost people groups, existence of the house of David, these things have been questioned over the years and archeology has confirmed again and again the reliability of God's Word as a true historical document. Two quotes:

William F Albright, known for his reputation as one of the greatest archaeologists of all time, says this, **"There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition. The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible...has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established**

**the accuracy of innumerable details and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a legitimate source of history.”**

Millar Burrows of Yale University says this, **“On the whole, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record...It strengthens our confidence in the accuracy with which the text has been transmitted through the centuries.”**

And we’ll get into that a little more next week. But listen, all I can tell you is, if we had time I could give you, God knows, literally hundreds of examples where archaeology has uncovered things that have caused people who are going, “that never happened!” to go, “Oops.”

Listen: Don't let anybody back you down about God's word. Read it. Know it. God's not hiding. He wants to be found. The truths of Christianity, support for God's Word, have satisfied the greatest minds of Christian history for 2000 years, and the people of God need to stop backing up and wondering if we have a reliable document. We can trust him to preserve the truth of its message – a message that points us to a salvation found in Jesus Christ. **“The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever.”** God wrote a book. What will you do with it?

# *God-breathed*

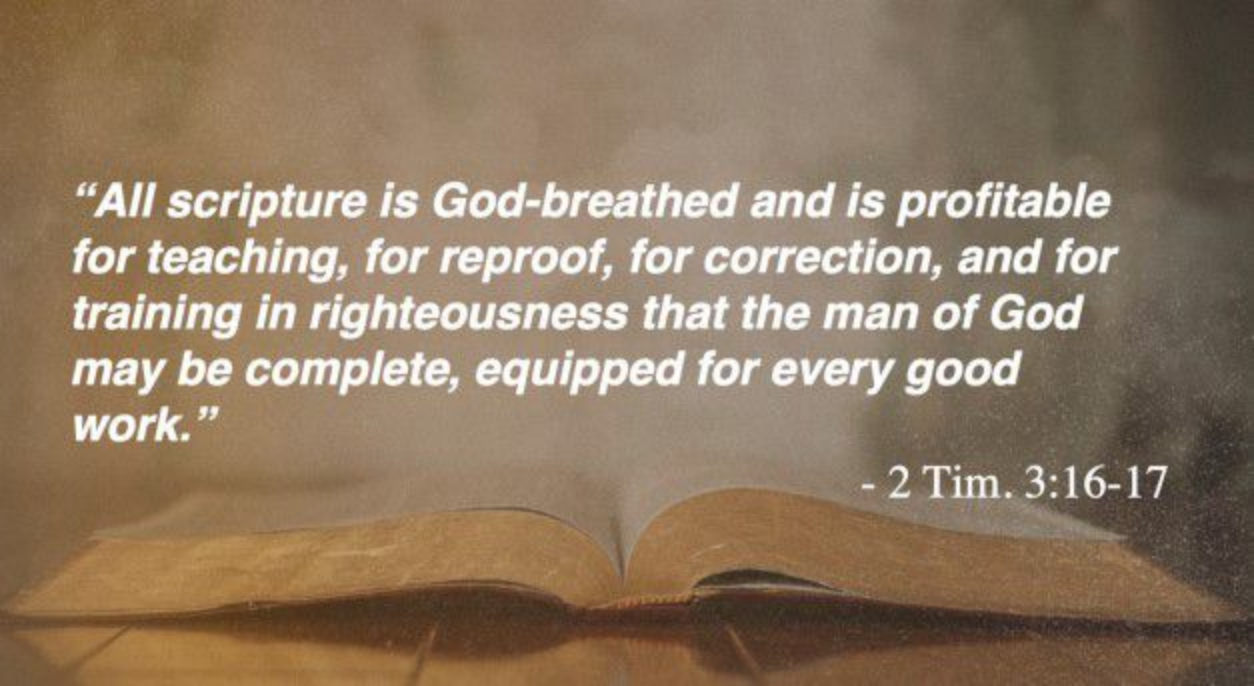
*Why I believe the Bible*






***“All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”***

***- 2 Tim. 3:16-17***



**Name a Common Reason that People Give for  
Not Believing the Bible:**

- 1. It's filled with contradictions**
  - 2. It's too old to be relevant**
  - 3. I have my own source of truth**
  - 4. It's just written by man**
  - 5. It's just a bunch of stories**
- 

***“The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever.”***

**- Is. 40:8**



## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

### 1) Preeminence among all literature.

#### *A) The Bible is preeminent in its circulation.*

- Translated into **3,658** different languages
- **100,000,000** copies still printed annually



## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

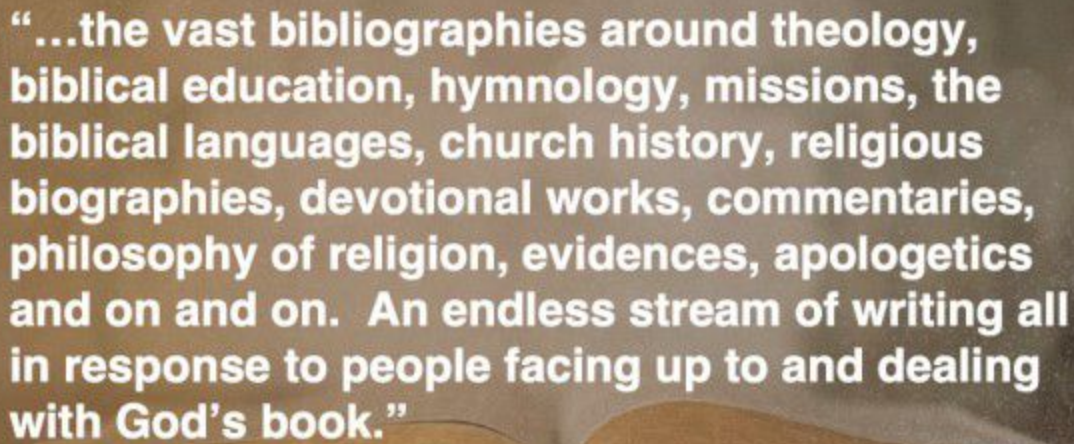
1) Preeminence among all literature.

- A) *The Bible is preeminent in its circulation.*
- B) *The Bible is preeminent in its influence.*



**“From the apostolic fathers dating from A.D. 95-  
modern times there is one great literary river  
streaming from the bible - bible dictionaries,  
bible encyclopedias, bible lexicons, and atlases  
and geographies. These may be taken as a  
starter. Then at random we may mention...”**



An open book is shown at the bottom of the frame, with its pages slightly curved. The background is a dark, textured surface. Overlaid on the top two-thirds of the image is a quote in white, bold, sans-serif text.

**“...the vast bibliographies around theology, biblical education, hymnology, missions, the biblical languages, church history, religious biographies, devotional works, commentaries, philosophy of religion, evidences, apologetics and on and on. An endless stream of writing all in response to people facing up to and dealing with God’s book.”**

**- Bernard Ramm**

## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

1) Preeminence among all literature.

A) *The Bible is preeminent in its circulation.*

B) *The Bible is preeminent in its influence.*

C) *The Bible is preeminent among all religious writings.*





**“Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table, but place the Bible on the right side all by itself, all alone. And with a wide gap between them, for there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the east which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever – a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science or religious thought.”**

**- Monier Williams**

## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

- 1) Preeminence among all literature.
- 2) Supernatural preservation against attack.**



## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

- 2) Supernatural preservation against attack.
  - A) *Against the attack of people*



## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

- 2) Supernatural preservation against attack.  
A) *Against the attack of people*

***“Within 100 years of my death, Christianity will have been swept from existence and have passed into history.”***

- M. de Voltaire

## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

- 2) Supernatural preservation against attack.
  - A) *Against the attack of people*
  - B) *Against the attack of time*



## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

### 2) Supernatural preservation against attack.

*A) Against the attack of people*

*B) Against the attack of time*

- Number of manuscripts?
- Do they agree?
- Gap of time?



**“There is no fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith that rests on a disputed reading. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain, especially is the case with the New Testament...”**



**“...The number of manuscripts of the New Testament is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some form or another. This can be said of no other book in the world.”**

**- Sir Fredrick Kenyon**





## Why I Believe the Bible: External Evidence

- 1) Preeminence among all literature
- 2) Supernatural preservation against attack
- 3) Proof from archaeology**



**“There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition. The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible...has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a legitimate source of history.”**

**- William F. Albright**

**“On the whole, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record...It strengthens our confidence in the accuracy with which the text has been transmitted through the centuries.”**

**- Millar Burrows**

