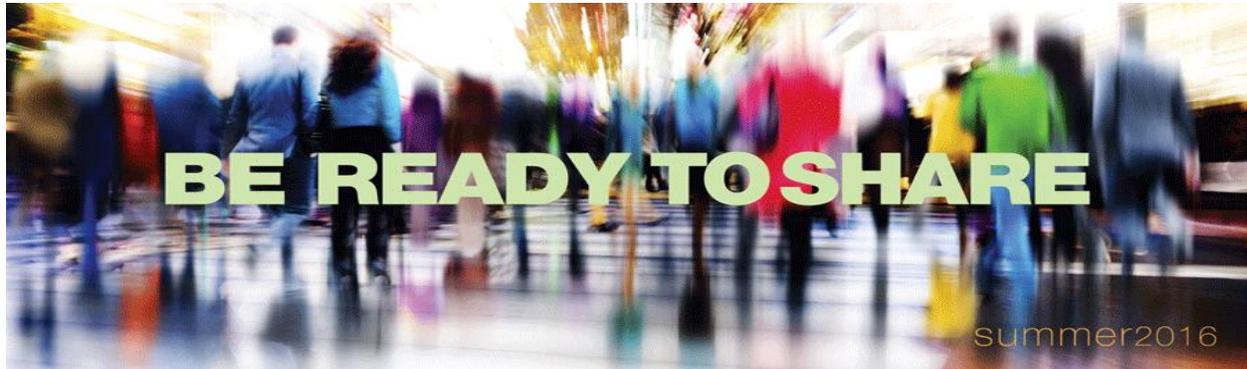


How Can You Trust the Bible?
Be Ready to Share Summer Sermon Series 2016
2 Timothy 3:14-17
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
June 26, 2016

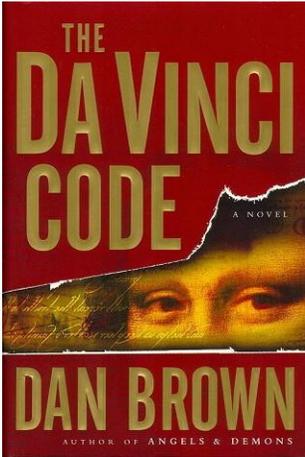
TEXT: 2 Timothy 3:14-17



This morning we return to this question: “Can the Bible be trusted?” We are looking at this in the context of our summer series of *Being Ready to Share*. Our great goal is not just that we would be filled with information and feel good about our convictions. My goal for us at Kenwood this summer is that we might become personally engaged in sharing our faith. To become personally engaged in sharing our faith means that we must have faith to begin with. It means that we must have a greater degree of confidence in starting conversations. We are using the acronym S.A.L.T., which stands for: Start the conversation, Ask questions, Listen, and Tell the story—the story of what God has done for us in Christ. The question about the reliability or trustworthiness of the Bible swirls around us in a variety of ways. The Bible is an interesting book. It is the book that is consistently the global top seller. Five billion copies of the Bible were sold last year, almost one for everyone on the planet. At the same time, the Bible made it into the number six position of the top ten most challenged books of the American Library Association. That means it was number six out of ten of books that were formally requested to be removed from public libraries. So you have both a love-hate relationship that is present in the society, and that is very real around us.

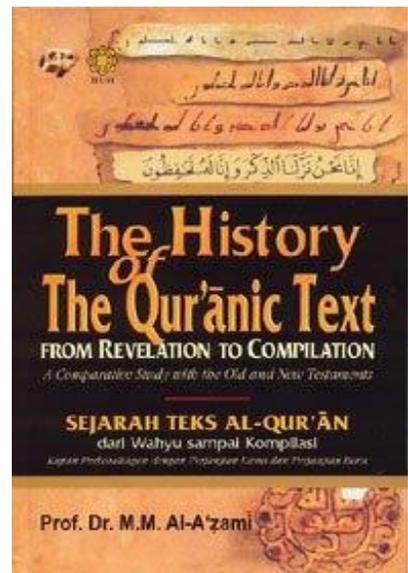
The question *How can you trust the Bible?* is answered negatively in three very different ways around us. I want to begin by considering these because we have to start the conversation, ask questions, and listen to people. You will hear very different things. You'll hear this what I would call a popular revisionism. It's a variation on the conspiracy theories that you see in works like the popular works by Dan Brown and his novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. *The Da Vinci Code* spins out a fictitious story, although it is presented as though it were factual, and yet this novel conveys a sense that the Bible is the product of man. One of the key characters in *The Da Vinci Code*, Dr. Teabing, says: “The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has

evolved, (and this is the key line), it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.” Central to the presentation of



the Bible and *The Da Vinci Code* is this popular revisionism that says we don't really have an authoritative version of the Bible, that the Bible is not what it seems to be, and in fact, there is a conspiracy that you need people like Dan Brown to expose. It reflects the cultural mistrust of established institutions that many people around us have. On the one side, this is a very real feature of our missionary context, and we can dislike it, but that won't change it. In reality, you will hear people give a variation of a skepticism, some conspiracy theory, that what you have in the Bible is not what it seems to be and that the church has changed it or it has evolved or grown in a different direction. A very different answer to the untrustworthiness of the Bible comes from the Islamic community both in the United States and globally. One of the most

central features of Muslim apologetics is that the Bible has been deliberately corrupted and changed, and when you are trying to share Christ with someone from a Muslim background, this is what they are taught growing up. They are taught that the Bible should not be read and it is discredited because the Bible has been deliberately changed over time. This is evident in a recent scholarly work published by Mohammed Mustafa Al-A'zami, a leading British Islamic scholar. He wrote a recent work called, *The History of The Qur'anic Text*, the holy book for Islam. The subtitle is, *From Revelation to Compilation*, so he is giving a history of the text of the Qur'an from the moment that the revelation was given to Mohammed to the printed edition of the Quran. He says the subtext is a comparative study with the Old and New Testament. As a result, Al-A'zami states that the Orthodox Church, being the sect which eventually established supremacy over all others, stood in opposition to various other ideas. The Orthodox Church, and by that he means Orthodox Christian faith that we would recognize, he says: "This church deliberately corrupted the Scriptures so as to reflect its own theological visions of Christ." So Muslim apologetics says that the Bible has been deliberately tampered with. When you ask Muslims on how specifically the Bible has been corrupted, the most frequent response is to say it



is the error of omission. Muslims will say that the Bible has been corrupted because all of the prophecies in the Bible about the coming of Mohammed have been eliminated, and so the Bible is discredited. So, on the one hand you very popular revisionism, you have a religious accusation that the Bible is corrupted, and then you have voices of New Testament scholarship, like Dr. Bart Ehrman, who teaches at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Bart Ehrman went to Wheaton College, and then he went on to Princeton Seminary where he received his PhD. In the course of his doctoral studies, he really moved

away from Christian faith. It's kind of a strange thing, Bart Ehrman teaches New Testament at a major university, and yet he says: "I am not a Christian. I am an agnostic with atheist leanings. My life and views would be the same whether Jesus existed or not." Bart Ehrman is frequently interviewed on mainstream media, CNN, major news networks, and has published 27 books. He is often the public voice of New Testament scholarship, which causes me inner turmoil.

On our way home from vacation, we stopped in North Carolina to do a *CASKET EMPTY* conference. It was an awesome three-hour conference at a church in Charlotte. It was a great way to finish a vacation. The pastor of the church came up to me at the break and said to me: "This is very personal for me since my son is a student at the University of North Carolina, and Bart Erhman is his teacher. Can you recommend any resources, because Bart is totally dismantling my son's faith?" One of Bart's 27 books is called, *Misquoting Jesus*, subtitled: *The story behind who changed the Bible and why*. In this work, Erhman says, referring to the text of the New Testament: "Not only do we not have the original, we don't have the first copies of the originals. We don't even have the copies of the copies of the originals, or the copies of the copies of the copies of the originals." Erhman ends his work basically saying that the New Testament texts have been revised over time and that we don't have any reliable information about the original text of Scripture, so he ends where he himself is in a position of radical skepticism and non-commitment. That is the skeptic's delight, to have just enough information to say I just can't make a commitment. Bart Erhman says: "I really don't know, but one thing I do know at the end of the day is that Jesus probably existed, but for sure He is not the Jesus your mother believes in or the Jesus of the stained-glass window or the Jesus of your least favorite televangelist or the Jesus proclaimed by the Vatican, the Southern Baptist convention, or the local megachurch."

These voices are around us, so how do we respond? The good news is that variations on these voices were present in Paul's day. The devil has no new ideas. He has no creative power. I really want us to become familiar with his tactics, because the familiar path is to take something good and twist it and distort it. He can't create anything, and you recognize his works this way. Paul faced very similar issues in the first century. We often tell ourselves that the world is changing so radically, so dramatically. People are doubting the Bible. It is always comforting to remember it was a major issue in the first century. Does the New Testament speak of that? Yes, it does. Clearly. So let's look at our passage. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, we will look at how the Bible talks about itself, and we also want to look at Paul's counsel to Timothy in this important set of verses, and then we are going to look at the textual transmission of the Bible as we go deeper into the message this morning.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:14:

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it. . ."

That word *continue* is an imperative. Other translations say *remain*, *stay with it*, *stay the course* in what you have learned and firmly believe, knowing from whom you learned it. Why would you ever tell someone to continue or remain or stay with it? You would tell someone this

because of pressure, either from a culture or from the church, to move away from it. So when you tell someone **Stay there!** you have good reason for doing that, and Paul does as well. There's a constant temptation from the culture and, sadly, from inside the church, to move away from the centrality of Scripture. Sometimes even inside the church we think we need to move on to something else, and yet Paul tells Timothy near the end of his ministry to remain in these things, things that he has learned, which signals to us that the Scripture is something that must be taught. Following Jesus Christ is not intuitive. You cannot find the answer inside your own heart. You have to be taught it. The ESV says: *things that you firmly believe*. The Greek expression here is that *you have become convinced or persuaded*, which gives me great hope that discipleship is learned over time. It has to be taught, and it doesn't happen in 24 hours. We saw this this spring that sanctification happens over a lifetime. If God totally transformed us right after we received Christ, we wouldn't even recognize each other, right? You become convinced, and notice he says in verse 14: “. . . know from whom you have learned it.” This was the point that Kurt was making in his testimony this morning, that if you look at the lives of people who are living by Scripture, you see increasing coherence. You see lives that make more sense. You don't see moral perfection overnight. That's not the point. Dr. John Patrick, who was here a couple of years ago, said that he could prove the truth of Christianity by looking at the lives of people who believed it. He said: “When you receive Jesus Christ, your life starts to make more sense, not less. If this was something untrue and you are building your whole life around a lie, then your life would start to make less sense.” He moves on and tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:15a:

“. . . and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings,”

Now we see at last what he is telling him to continue in: Stay in the Scriptures, the sacred writings, literally the holy letters. Deeper in verse 15 he tells us more about these writings, that these writings are:

“. . . able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

These documents are differentiated from any other holy book. These books, these writings, make you wise instead of foolish. They make you wise specifically with respect to salvation, salvation which comes through faith. This is not just faith in general, or belief in general, but faith in Jesus Christ. This is just like what we talked about last Sunday, what science really does and the limits of science, yet science is very good at obtaining its object. We see here that the Scriptures have as its central purpose to reveal God, to inform us about who God is, and how we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ. I would submit to you that the Bible does an outstanding job of communicating that. The Bible will not give you your asset allocation throughout your lifetime. The Bible will not tell you which horse will win the next race. The Bible will not tell you which woman you should marry of the five you are considering, but the Bible will make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is not just believe. Our culture often uses this word in a generic sense, like an Ashanti's recent song:

“Just believe the unbelievable, dream the unthinkable
You can do all things if you believe!
You can reach the unreachable, see the unforeseeable
All things are possible to best believe.”

You don't need Bible for that kind of belief. That's just belief in general. Believe what? It is really unclear. There is very little here to focus on or what the belief is directed to. The Scripture will tell you to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. This is unlike Venus Williams' statement, which I have been reading all week and find perplexing. Maybe you'll get it better than I do. Venus Williams said recently: "Just believe in yourself; even if you don't, pretend that you do and, at some point, you will." I just thought, "I can't build my life on that sentence." The Bible calls us to faith in Christ, and it reveals God. God speaks in Scripture. We need to be people who continue, remain, stay close to it, be saturated in it, have our mind and thoughts soaked in the Word of the living God. As Paul will say in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4:

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."

These are the items of maximum significance. The central message of the Bible is the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, for the revelation of who God is. Paul tells Timothy to remain in the Scriptures because of 2 Timothy 3:16. This is the Bible speaking about itself. Paul says:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God. . ."

I love and I'm so thankful for that first word: *all*—all of the Scriptures: Old Testament, New Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, the Song of Songs, the Psalms, Isaiah, Romans, Revelation, Jude, 1 John. All Scripture is breathed out by God. The Bible claims to be God's Word.

I was interviewed by a group that was trying to reach the Muslims for Christ, and in the interview, I was asked: "How can you tell if a book comes from God?" That was a loaded question in that setting, and my response was to say that the Bible claims to be spoken by God. God is the subject of the first sentence. He is the first speaker. He is the main actor in Scripture. He is the point of the story. Four hundred times just in the Old Testament, it says: *"Thus says the Lord."* *"The Word of the Lord"* comes 250 times; *"God said,"* 50 times in the first two Books of the Bible. The Bible presents itself as God our heavenly Father speaking. It is self-evident that it is not the work of man. In this, Dan Brown is fundamentally mistaken at this point. 2 Peter 1:21 states explicitly:

"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

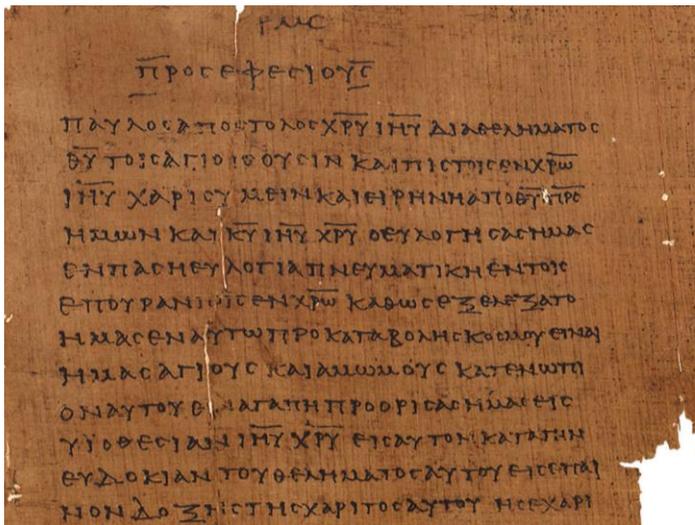
That is the biblical vision. It is wonderful that the Bible contains the works in human language of more than 40 different people. It is written in three different languages. It is written by people who did not know one another, over a 1500 year period. How do you get 40 people, who don't know each other, who lived thousands of miles apart, over millennia apart from each other, how to get those people to conspire to write a book that coheres and makes sense? The only way that could happen is if there is a single mind behind it. Dr. John Pierce, a dear friend of ours, was finishing his doctorate at MIT, and he was a non-Christian. People were reaching out to him, and he had no answer for that phenomenon until he finally said that the only way that

could happen is if there is an author behind it, and he became a Christian. The Bible states it is breathed out by God. The skeptics can stay that maybe the original was that way, but we don't have the original. Both Dan Brown's variation, the Muslim variation, and Bart Ehrman's variation on this all share a feature that says: "Okay, I might even concede the inspiration, or God breathing out of the original, but that's long gone." The skeptic hides behind the faulty transmission of the Bible, and that is where we really have to think this morning. We are going to get a little technical. The question is: "Has the Bible been reliably transmitted to us?"

Dr. Daniel Wallace is a professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is also the Executive Director for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, and he has devoted his academic career to digital photography of the corpus of the manuscript tradition. I want to walk you through this a little bit today, because I want you to know from the depths of your being that, not only has God's Word been breathed out, but God has sovereignly and powerfully preserved the text of the Scriptures for us so that we can say with confidence that the Bible is the best attested document of the ancient world by so far. I also want to tell you right up front that there is no evidence at all, zero-evidence, in this enormous manuscript tradition of deliberate tampering or attempt to change or delete passages.



I want to show you first a picture of a papyrus fragment. We have over 300 early copies of the New Testament. Papyrus is the paper of the ancient world, pressed together with strips from the papyrus plant and written on one side. The nature of paper, the properties of paper, is simply that paper does not last for 2000 years. The answer to the question "Why don't we have the original manuscripts?" is that paper disintegrates after about 100 years, especially paper that is handed around and copied multiple times. This paper was not put in a museum; the Bible does not belong in a museum. It was copied hundreds of times and circulated, as we will see, throughout the Mediterranean worlds. So, where are the original manuscripts?

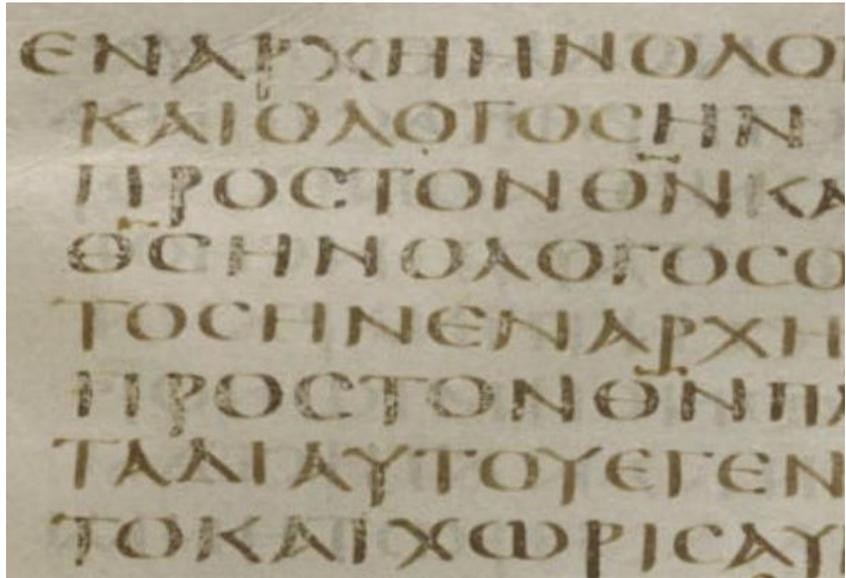


They disintegrated. That's okay to say, as you'll see, because we have 300 early papyrus copies, and virtually every verse of the New Testament is attested in this early body of material.

Not only do we have papyrus documents, we have the great uncial manuscripts. This is one of the great ones. This is a manuscript called *Sinaiticus*. It is from the fourth century and is written

on a slightly more durable product of vellum, animal skin. It is written in an elegant script. This is the beginning of John's Gospel, and through this manuscript, *Sinaiticus*, we have virtually the

whole New Testament preserved in its entirety. You can even see *Sinaiticus* online. You can zoom in or you can go to the British Museum and see the manuscript. What do we have in terms of the manuscript tradition? For the Greek New Testament, we have 5,824 manuscripts in Greek, and the average length of each manuscript is over 400 pages. We have 2.6 million pages of text of the New Testament,



and that's just the Greek manuscripts. Not only do we have 5,824 Greek manuscripts, but early on in church history, in light of the great commission when Jesus said: "Go into all the nations," that means that when go into the nations, you can't give the nations of the world Greek manuscripts. No matter that the Greeks think that the whole rest the world should speak Greek, they don't, so early on, the church translated the Bible repeatedly. So, the phenomenon of multiple translations is an ancient phenomenon that attests the necessity of the Great Commission. You can't fulfill the Great Commission without translating the Bible, so early versions of the Bible were translated into Latin. We have 10,000 early copies of that. We have more than 5,000 early manuscripts with translations of the Bible into Arabic, Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Gothic, Ethiopian, Armenian. So, within 400 years of the New Testament, we have 25,000 handwritten copies. Let's imagine for just a moment that through some disaster that can scarcely be conceived of, all of these manuscripts, all the Greek manuscripts, all the Latin manuscripts, all these other translations, totally disappeared. We would still have the writings of the early Greek Christians, and their writings fill the shelves of the library—you know, Greeks don't have the gift of brevity. Within the early patristic writings, the whole New Testament has 8,000 verses. In the Greek writings of the early church fathers, there are more than one million citations of Scripture. That means that every verse of the New Testament is cited 125 times, so if you lost all of the manuscripts you could still reconstruct the New Testament 125 times just by the citations. How does this compare with the other works of antiquity, 25,000 manuscripts? Let's look at the works of the Greek historians, like Herodotus; Latin writers, like Caesar, Cicero. The average number of manuscripts for a classical author is 20. So, 25,000 versus 20; 25,000 manuscripts within the first generation. For classical writers, most of those manuscripts, 20 is a generous number. Most of them have only a single manuscript, or as many as 10 or 12. Yet, the time interval between them can be 1000 years. If people like Bart Ehrman applied the skepticism to other ancient documents that he applied to the New Testament, the entire field of classics would be eliminated. This is the basis for saying that Jesus Christ is more attested as a historical figure than Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, Cicero, Herodotus, and Alexander the

Great: 25,000 to 20!

Do all of these manuscripts agree with each other? They are handwritten, copied, and the honest answer is no, they don't all agree. You will hear Bart Ehrman say this: "While there are 8,000 verses in the New Testament, there are 140,000, actually a little less than that - 138,000 some. Let's round the number to 140,000 words in the New Testament. Bart Ehrman will say: "There are 3-400,000 textual variants." These are differences in the manuscripts. Now, from Cincinnati we know Mark Twain well for his line: "If the world comes to an end, I want to be in Cincinnati, because everything happens in Cincinnati 10 years later than anywhere else." But Mark Twain also said: "There are lies, damned lies, and statistics." This is a statistical lie to leave it there, because it gives you the impression that for every word in the New Testament, there are two or three variations. It sounds like there is total chaos, but that would be the furthest from the truth. Why are there 3-400,000 variants? There are simple reasons.

Number one: You have 25,000 handwritten copies. Why are there not very many manuscript variations for the works of Herodotus? Because there is just a handful of copies. When you have 25,000 manuscripts, you have all kinds of variations.

Number two: What is the nature of these variations? There are three main types:

#1 The vast majority of differences, 75%, are differences in the spelling of a word.

#2 Another common variant are differences in word order or synonyms.

#3 Less than 1% of all the variants change the sense of a phrase. None, zero, absolutely nada, zilch, of the textual variants materially affect or change a single major doctrine of Christian faith. The discipline of textual criticism is to compare these manuscripts and to try to recover the original wording. There are recognizable errors when you are hand copying. If you tried to hand copy a front page of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and then compared it with the original, you would find a number of these types of errors: errors of haplography, of deleting a word, that's a variant; errors with the fancy name of homoioteleuton, which means the ending of the word is the same, and so you reduplication that; sometimes you repeat a word; sometimes the difference between a letter can be just one stroke, and it can change the meaning or change the word. That's a variant. It would be like finding a copy of the United States Constitution and seeing the preamble, picking it up and reading: "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect *onion*. . ." A revisionist historian would say: "You see, this is the original. This whole project was for agriculture," and you'd say: "Well, we do have other copies, and if we compare them, we see the difference between a U and an O is that top loop." When you think, is it *onion* or is it *union*? That is the academic discipline of textual criticism.

Bart Ehrman would give you the impression that the transmission of the Bible is like the children's game of telephone, and this is deeply misleading. The whole point of the telephone game is to repeat it orally to see how far the story can change, and everyone will laugh at the end. No one sets up the telephone game the way Dwight Eisenhower did the night before D-Day. When he looked at the commanders who were to be arriving on the beaches, and they were given a map of their quadrant, Dwight Eisenhower said: "Memorize your quadrant because the lives of all the people around you will depend on your memory of this square."

That was no joke. No commander says: "Let me get this as far off as I can." You see, the game of telephone is just that, a game. The transmission of the Bible is life-and-death. It was not transmitted orally. It was transmitted in writing. We have the ability to interview, if you will, people all along the chain, right up to the earliest source. Rather than one stream of information, there are multiple lines. The game of telephone also invites us to think that scribes had tampered and changed the text. Anyone who says this has no direct experience with scribal culture.

My sister is an accountant, and you know accountants, right? "They are kind of loose with the facts; kind of bend the balance sheet; kind of add in figures where it seems good to them. Accountants have tax returns that just get longer over time." Anyone who would say something like that probably doesn't have a sister who's an accountant and has never really known an accountant. That's NOT how accountants think. You need an accountant in your life, most of you, to keep things lined up, to keep things faithfully recorded in infinite detail. In the Books of the Bible, Ezra, who was a scribe, an ancient accountant, is filled with lists, even documents, the number of people who came, how many gold vessels they had. That's how accountants think. That's how scribes think. That's how people who transmit text think. I couldn't find a picture to show you, but I wanted to tell you about the ending of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. At the end of every major section of the manuscript, there is a scribal notation, and the scribal notation at the end of Deuteronomy says this: "The total number of verses in the Pentateuch—that is the first five books of the Bible—is 5845. The total number of reading portions is 167. The total number of words in the Pentateuch is 97,856, and the total number of letters in the Pentateuch is 400,945." It takes over a year to produce a Torah scroll, and if it is shown to be inaccurate in a single usage, it cannot be used for public worship. At the end of most manuscripts, the scribe will often make a cameo appearance: "Here I am," and I want to share with you, as a window into what scribal culture is really like, three of these endings from the manuscript. Here is one from the second century, just generations from the New Testament itself. The scribe says:

"I adjure you who shall copy this, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by his glorious appearing when he comes to judge the living and the dead, that you compare what you transcribe, and correct it carefully against the manuscript from which you copy."

This is an oath, early in the second century, of a scribe telling another scribe: "When you copy this down, double check it against the manuscript, and if you made any mistakes correct it." You can see this in the manuscripts. You see little corrections checked against the original. Here is the ending from a manuscript from the fourth century, an early Coptic Arabic copy of the New Testament. I love this. The scribe ends by saying this, and the last sentence is my favorite:

"There is no scribe who will not pass away, but what his hands have written will remain forever. Write nothing with your hand but that which you will be pleased to see at the resurrection. May the Lord Jesus Christ cause this holy copy to avail for the saving of souls."

How about a sixth century scribe? This one had just finished hand copying the entire Bible, gets to the end, and says this:

“By reading the divine Scripture the scribe wholesomely instructs his own mind, and by copying the precepts of the Lord he spreads them far and wide. What happy application, what praiseworthy industry, to preach unto men by means of the hand, to untie the tongue by means of the fingers, to bring salvation to mortals and to fight the Devil’s schemes with pen and ink!”

This scribe gets so enthralled with the completion of this task that he waxes so eloquently to go on and say:

“If I may dare so to speak, three fingers are made to express the utterances of the Holy Trinity. O sight glorious to those who contemplate it carefully. The fast-travelling reed pen writes down the holy words and thus avenges the malice of the Devil, who caused a reed to be used to smite the head of the Lord during his Passion.”

He feels that little reed pen is been redeemed because it was a reed that struck Christ when He died for your sins and mine. This anonymous scribe says the reed has been redeemed. That is what scribal culture is like.

I once asked a Muslim what manuscript evidence there is that a passage about the coming of Mohammed has been deleted. Wouldn’t you think that if that had been true, there would have been one slip in the 25,000 copies spread out all over, translated into multiple languages? There is not a single passage. Bart Ehrman is profoundly mistaken. It is actually quite easy to tell if it's *onion* or *union*. You simply compare the manuscripts. The New Testament text, the text of the Old Testament, is the most attested, most documented document from the ancient world. We have great confidence that what you hold in your hands is the Word of God. It is breathed out by God. It has been translated into languages that we know and understand. The scholarly discipline of textual criticism is ongoing. Seventy-five new manuscripts have been discovered in just the last couple of years. The results of this study are giving us an even more and more accurate text. Even if you compare, for example, the NIV translation from 1984 and the NIV in 2011, there are about 20 differences, none of which significantly affect the major doctrines of our faith. They are just slight differences as we get a clearer and clearer picture of the Word. This is also, by the way, why you can't be a King James only person. You can't be King James only person because people need the Bible in the language they understand, and so you don't need to send people to Elizabethan England 400 years ago to catch the Word of Christ. The King James Version was done with a handful of manuscripts that were available at the time, and they did a phenomenal job. I love the King James Version, but it is not inspired. No translation is inspired. The translations that are done today are translations that are based on thousands of manuscripts, much better and much earlier. When people say to me: “Pastor David, there are so many translations, I'm just sticking with the King James,” what I say to them is: “If you are going to have surgery next week, do you want the doctor to use the medical knowledge that was available 400 years ago, or do you want your surgeon to use all available current information?” To date, I've never had anyone say: “You know, I want the retro experience. I want it.” It is not to put that down. It is valuable, but our knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is significantly better now.

Where does this all take us? Where does it take Paul? If it is breathed out by God, then it is

profitable; it benefits us; it teaches us; it reproves us; it corrects us; it trains us in righteousness. When you don't know what to do, let your heavenly Father teach you. The Bible is your heavenly Father speaking. When you feel you are going the wrong way and don't know what to do about it, let your heavenly Father reprove you. When you say you don't think you're doing this right, let your heavenly Father correct your form. If you have grown up without Christ and you don't have a strong basis from looking at other people and knowing what's right to do, just let your heavenly Father give you a strong background in doing what's right. In the end, in 2 Timothy 3:17, the goal is by reading the Scripture, having a Scripture, learning it together, is:

“. . . that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

This means literally that the man of God, the woman of God, the child of God may be equipped, *totally outfitted*. We had 21 students and chaperones leave the parking lot at eight o'clock this morning. It was awesome. People were checking their gear. They are going into the woods for five days. My son, as I was bringing him here early this morning, said: “Dad, what if I forgot something?” I said: “Well, then you didn't need it. Part of the joy of camping is that if you don't have it, you don't need it.” But, when you have God's Word, as a result, we are fully outfitted, we are packed to live in this world.

The application is just one thing: Test it. Get a copy of the Bible. If you don't have one, take one of the ones in the pews or there are extra ones in the narthex. Take one and read it and then put it into practice and see if God's Word is not breathed out and profitable to teach us together how to live. Let us pray.

Lord, we worship You. We thank You for Your Good News, for Your Word, that you are a God who speaks, and that we can have total confidence that what we hold in our hands is the Word of the living God translated for us, and available. Would you make us a people hungry for Your Word. We delight in You. We thank You for not only breathing your Word out, but for watching over its preservation.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.