

## ATTENDING THE CONTENDERS

Hosea 2:1-13

In our last study in Hosea titled “Contending for the Faith,” we considered several reasons why our gospel warrants defending. The Apostle Jude (V2-3) warned of those who would creep into our assemblies and turn grace into lasciviousness, therefore the need to contend for the faith. We discussed our contending for the gospel in three parts. **Contending for the faith is:**

**Authored by the Lord, Authorized by the Lord, Attended by the Lord.**

Christ, as Lord is the Author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2) As Author, he established our gospel. He is the sum and substance of it. It reveals his Person and work as God-Man, eternally appointed, eminently qualified, totally committed, and completely successful in redemption, having accomplished for us all the Father required of us to justly stand throughout eternity, holy and without blame before him in love. He will finish our faith. **Matthew 5:18** *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* The law, fulfilled in Christ must and does pronounce every sinner for whom Christ died justified by his blood and righteousness imputed. When that last sheep is brought into the fold and Christ returns for his sheep, then will Christ have finished the faith. It will have accomplished its intended goal and our faith will give way to sight, “for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

As the Author of our faith, He is also the **authority** over it. (Matthew 28:18-20) He alone authorizes those who will defend the faith. **Ephesians 4:11-12:** He “gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints,” for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Romans 10:15: “How shall they preach except they be sent.” Jesus gave this command to his disciples in John 20:21; “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Only those **authorized** and sent by Christ will “preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things, though some can preach so close the truth that if possible they would deceive the very elect. Their motive is deception, their message is deadly and their ministry is diabolical, and their mission is doomed to failure which is all the more reason why we must contend for the faith. Only those sent of Christ, with the message of grace, declaring an accomplished redemption are authorized by God.

The third consideration in “contending for the faith” is that as **Author** and **authority** of the faith, the Lord **attends** those who earnestly contend for the faith.

My title today is “attending the contenders.” **Hosea 2:3-13**

Our Savior’s last command to his disciples before he ascended to the Father was; “go ye into all the world and preach the gospel and lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world.” (Matthew 28: 19-20)

I see a two-fold purpose connected with this promise of Christ's presence with us.

1. **He equips the contender of the faith with the faith.** He makes us skillful in the word of righteousness.
2. **He enlightens the chosen unto faith by the faith.** From objective to subjective faith.

The commandment given to those who would contend for the faith is a grave responsibility. To stand before a people and say; *“Thus saith the Lord,”* is no light matter and is the responsibility of those alone whom he sends. Their qualifications must be measured by the truth they declare concerning Christ's person and his accomplishments. **(2 Corinthians 11:4)** *“For if he that cometh preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted might well bear with me.”* James 3:1: *“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”* This follows on the heels of his admonition in James 1:19. *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath.”* For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The gospel is offensive. It is powerful. It's a two edged sword. Persuasion (contending) is better than power. Our contending should be motivated by the truth in love, not angry confrontation. We let the word work. So, we go, 2 Corinthians 4:7, *“knowing that we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the Excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”*

*“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.”* (Matthew 10:16) It is not a pleasant thing to stand against anyone, but a necessary thing to stand for the truth to everyone, even to those of our own household as God requires in Hosea 2: 1-2, because Christ warns us that as they hated him, so will they hate those who come in his name with his message.

So how does God equip his ministers?

**He gives us his Spirit.**

**John 16:7:** *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”* He will guide, embolden and equip you. *“Wait for the Spirit.”* (Acts 1:4)

**He gives us the words to say.**

**Matthew 10:19;** *“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.”* The *“mystery of godliness”* must be revealed to the speaker as well as the hearer.

**He gives us motive.**

**Isaiah 55:11,** *“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”* God's commission to the Church is to *“go into all the world and preach the gospel.”* We are a *“sent”* people. Christ's promise to all is, *“Lo, I am with you always.”* I will attend you in your

commission to earnestly contend for the faith. I will send my Spirit and he shall guide you into all truth.

The Psalmist said of Christ in Psalm 23; *“he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name sake.”* He does not follow or send, he leads. *“yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.”* He said that where two or three were gathered together in his name, there would he be also in the midst. Why go with us?

For the contending of the faith to be successful, to have its intended effect, Christ must go with us. The Holy Spirit of God must perform, under the preaching of this faith, certain operations. The first is to equip his servants. **Romans 10:13-15.** 13 *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

*15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”* In Ephesians 6, Paul lists the whole armour given to contenders of the faith. The first is **truth**. The last is **the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God**. The word is our only offensive weapon. **First he equips the contenders of the faith with the faith.**

### **Second he enlightens the chosen unto faith, by the faith. Hosea 2:1-3**

To those outside the grace of God our gospel will be a *“savor of death unto death.”* To the remnant according to the election of grace, it is *“a savor of life unto life.”* This is the work of the Lord. We cannot effect the gospel; we can only preach it. We preach and trust God to enlighten his people.

Here in Hosea 2: 1-3 God instructs his contenders to *ōpleadō* with Gomer. (Israel) The Hebrew word *ōpleadō* is **CONTEND**. It carries the same meaning as in 2 Corinthians 5:11 where Paul said; *“knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”* We persuade men (contend with them) concerning their idolatry.

**Romans 10:1** is our attitude and motive. *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”*

The Holy Spirit of God must accompany the preaching of the gospel because the objects of his ministry are *ōdead in trespasses and sin.ō* They are ignorant of their state, they are ignorant of who God is, and the Christ who has redeemed them. It is in this *ōfaithō* (gospel) only that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.ō It is this gospel only that is the power of God unto salvation.

John 6:44; *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”* This drawing is the work of the spirit of God in the preaching of the gospel. John 6:63; *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

In the regeneration and conversion of a sinner, the revelation of who that sinner is in Christ is revealed to his mind and heart. Gomer, though estranged from God, was no less loved by God. It remained for him to reveal to her that love.

But his love is not dispensed at the expense of his holiness and justice. It is his love that provides what his holiness and justice demands. We will see this love demonstrated in God's "longsuffering" with Israel, typified by Gomer.

He begins with the gospel, the faith.

**Hosea 2: 1-3:** 1 ¶ "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. 2 Plead with your mother, (Israel) plead: (contend) for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts."

As holy and righteous, God can require and demand no less than perfection of his people.

Matthew 5:48 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." 1 Peter 1:16, "Because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy". In Hosea 1:21, God reveals Israel's (Gomer) problem and even the elect by nature. They have "departed from the Lord." Though chosen of God and given special favors, Israel forsook the Lord for their idols. They forsook the temple in Jerusalem, where God promised to meet with them for the pagan shrines in Bethel and Dan. They rejected the temple, a type of Christ for the convenience and comforts of false religion. They fell to the lie and under the influence of "certain men," (**Jude:4**) who crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ".

As the results of this sin, (**rivaling Christ with the idols of Bethel and Dan,**) they deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Israel (Gomer) is blinded to the truth. She cannot "behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." WHY, because **Hosea 2:2**...., Whoredoms fill her sight. Everything she sees is abominable to God. Her eye is dark because the truth that sets men free is absent her assemblies. What she thinks pleases God, impugns his holiness and justice. There is no spiritual discernment by her eye. **John 3:19;** "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Because whoredoms fill her sight, **2:2**....her heart is filled with adulteries. She is perfectly happy to live her life in spiritual adultery with false religion.

God's command is to "put away" your whoredoms and your adulteries. OR ELSE: **2:3**, "Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst." Here begins a lifelong process with God's elect. Will we put away our whoredoms and adulteries? Or will God have to take them? Will we put away any and all that rivals Christ and his righteousness imputed as our whole salvation? Will we have no other gods before God? Will we have no confidence in the flesh for any part of our acceptance before a holy God, or will God have to take them?

We know all too well the difficulty of living a holy and righteous life in our character and conduct. Yet that is our command from God. Colossians 3:9, "Do not lie to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds." 1 John 5:21, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." A victory today is a failure tomorrow. "What we would, that do we not. O wretched man that I am,

*who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ðI thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 7)

But we don’t even account one victory in our character and conduct as forming part of the reason God favors us. Christ got our victory and God’s favor by his death on Calvary.

The warfare between the Spirit and the flesh is a battle for the hearts and soul of men fought under the message of the contenders of the faith. Here we begin to see the love of God for Israel. He has so completely shut his people up to Christ that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Every victory we gain is attributed to his power. Even the warfare, though painful is a blessing from God, for he only chastises those whom he loves. This warfare is our calling until we are united with Christ in glory. It is his work to strip us of our whoredoms and adulteries, for which our Savior died on the cross and hinders our fellowship with the Father and his Son.

**V-3.** To be *“stripped naked”* is to be uncovered before God. It is, as the writer in Hebrews 4:13; *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”* It is to stand before a holy God without excuse and without a covering for our sin. It is to see our deservedness of condemnation by a holy God. It is to be totally helpless to defend ourself or supply a covering for our nakedness acceptable to God. It is to be barren as a wilderness, producing nothing but briars and thorns, made so because our persons are dead in trespasses and sin. It is to be like a dry ground, where death by thirst is eminent. We see all this under the gospel.

Sinners are stripped naked before a holy God by the law of God. The law of God pronounces a curse upon all who seek justification by the deeds thereof. But this is all Gomer knows. Having given herself to the idols of Bethel and Dan, and rejecting the Christ of God, (typified by the temple in Jerusalem) she is ignorant of a just God and Savior. Without the contenders of the faith in 2:1, she would remain ignorant of God’s design for her life. But we’ll see in a moment how Gomer is a trophy of God’s grace. Her *“dying of thirst”* would give way to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

**V4.** *“And I will not have mercy on her children, for they be the children of whoredoms.”* I will not strip her children for they are not mine. Romans 9:21; *“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?”* To God alone is the right to choose.

**V5.** *“For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.”*

Gomer’s lovers are the enemies of the cross. They oppose grace. They reject the righteousness of Christ against their own self-righteousness. They deny the Person and reject the accomplished work of Christ for all the salvation of all his people. Though a trophy of God’s grace, Gomer, in ignorance and rebellion, gave herself over to all manner of uncleanness. She attributed the blessings of God to her lovers. In this state of ignorance Gomer continues to *“go after”* her lovers until: **V6.** God intervenes. What will cause a sinner to abandon his idolatry? God must strip him of it. He does this by cutting off our lovers. He cuts off our affections for the enemies of the gospel for you and I are no different than Gomer. Unregenerate, we loved salvation by works, all the while calling it grace.

Here we see grace in action. Though Gomer persisted in her idolatry, (V-5) *“I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and water, my wool and flax, mine oil and drink,”* God had other plans for her. I will cut off her lovers. V7. *“And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them:”* Why, V-6. *“Therefore, behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, and she shall not find her paths.”* How does God strip his people of our whoredoms? He shuts us up to Christ, to the faith. He makes us to see and rest in the finished work of Christ to redeem his people by his satisfaction to law and justice. We won’t rest until we see Christ.

This is typified by the hedge and the wall. The **hedge** represents the law, strict and unbending, unforgiving in its demands for perfection with certain death on all who come against it. The law of God pronounces a curse upon all who *“continue not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.”* (Galatians 3:10) It is against the *öpricksö* of this hedge sinner’s kick. (Acts 9:5)

The **wall** represents the gospel. Where the law would exclude sinners from salvation based on our disobedience, the gospel declares a satisfaction to the law’s demand upon the sinner by another’s obedience. Let me illustrate.

**Read Isaiah 5:1-7** *“Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, (justice) but behold oppression; (legalism, bondage to the law) for righteousness, (mercy) but behold a cry.”*

What God did in judgment against the nation Israel for their unbelief and disobedience, is overshadowed by what he does for his elect. Where he broke down the hedge and wall around Israel, he builds and maintains that hedge and wall around his people. Israel rejected the Law and the gospel. They trusted the hedge to protect them from the wrath of God. God took away their hope. The law, in which the y boasted, became their enemy. Rejecting the law, they rejected the Gospel because the law points sinners to Christ, revealed in the gospel. Their end is that of the nation Israel. For the Gomers of this world, the law is no longer their enemy because Christ has satisfied that law by perfect obedience to its precept and penalty. Justified sinners see the impossibility of being justified by their law keeping, (the hedge) and look to the wall (Christ). **Zechariah 2:5** *“For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”*

**V6.** God shut Gomer off to her lovers. How? **V-6,..He showed her something better.** He showed her Christ. The hedge of thorns represents the Law and the impossibility of entering into his fellowship based on her obedience to the law. **Romans 8: 3**, “*for what the law could not do.*” The hedge of thorns made it impossible for Gomer to get to her lovers. When we see the extent of the law, we see the utter impossibility of salvation by deeds of the law.

The wall represents the gospel and her safety and security in him to whom the wall shuts her up, even the Lord. God reminded Gomer of her Christ, whom she abandoned for her lovers. *“Then shall she say, V-7, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. **Read Jeremiah 31:31-32.***

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.”*

When God revealed the true Christ and his righteousness to our mind and heart, he showed us the utter sinfulness of the lovers to whom we have prostituted ourselves. Those who see will gladly return to their God because he has granted them faith and repentance and has made them willing in the day of his power. The idol to which we prostituted ourselves is revealed to be such and no sinner will knowingly worship an idol, but all in ignorance do.

**V8.** “*For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal*” She did not know me, a Just God and Savior.

Therefore being ignorant of God’s standard of judgment, every judgment she made was legal and deadly. **Here read Jeremiah 31:33.** *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.<sup>34</sup> And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* No sinner by nature knows God before he knows God until he knows God.

This shows us the need for those called to earnestly contend for the faith. Though Gomer did what she did in ignorance, God will not leave his people in ignorance and idolatry.

**V9.** “*Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.*”

I will take away from her those things attributed to her lovers but provided by me. In the season thereof (at a time of my choosing) I will show myself to be the benefactor of her gifts. This is a lifelong process. It does not happen overnight. Little by little God removes those things from us that hinder our fellowship with God. Even though gifts from God, none of them contribute one iota to our salvation. Have I renounced what I highly esteemed: my pursuits for his person?

**V10.** *“And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.”* I will show her, her sin and nothing they offer her will draw her away from me. Have you been made to see your idolatry?

I will expose her lewdness and none of her former affections can overcome my mercy and grace toward her. She has the pearl of great price. It's priceless.

**V11.** *"I will also cause all her mirth (joy) to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts."* I will cause to cease her joy and desire in those things which are an abomination to my face. Where she once found peace and contentment, I will show her a better peace. Is Christ your peace?

**V12.** *"And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, these are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them."* I will take away every work in which she had a boast and replace it with Christ and his righteousness imputed.

**V13.** *"And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot me, saith the LORD."* God visits the days of Baalim upon all he saves. The purpose is an ever reminder of our sinfulness and unworthiness and a constant reminder of the greatness of his salvation to those of us who don't deserve it. It also reminds us that if He doesn't keep us we will fall headlong into sin.

**Read Psalm 130:3-4.** *"If thou, Lord, shouldest make iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."*

There is a people against whom God will not mark iniquities, therefore they stand.

Their iniquities are not marked because they stand. They stand because Christ is seated at the Father's right hand in glory having borne away their iniquities.

They are not marked (exposed to the wrath of God) because their sin has been charged to and satisfied by Him in whom alone resides forgiveness. It is by him, with him and in him, even Christ. Having experienced true forgiveness, these alone can render true worship. They can approach unto a holy God and find acceptance with him because someone, attended by the Lord, contended for the faith with them.

What a blessing of grace to have experienced this hearing of the faith and made to believe it.

What a gracious avenue of service to engage with Christ in contending for the faith that the elect might see their iniquities forgiven. What a gracious God we have who has justified the ungodly based on a satisfaction already accomplished. It is under the preaching of this faith they are regenerated. Let us earnestly contend for the faith, attended by the Lord, for the cry goes out; *"come over and help us,"* and *"our God is mighty to save"* *"whosoever calls on the name of the Lord."*

Next message: **Hosea 2:14-23**

God will allure his people. He *will give them the Valley of Achor for a door of hope.* That door is Christ. He is our hope: not a possible failure but a certain expectation of final glory because he attends the contenders of the faith.

By Winston Pannell