

The Word of God is Inspired

II Timothy 3:16

The story is told of a young boy who was giving his grandmother a Bible for Christmas. He wanted to write something special in the flyleaf but wasn't sure what to say, so he copied what he had seen in a book that was highly valued by his father.

Christmas morning came and the young boy's grandmother opened her gift. Not only was she pleased to receive the Bible but was amused by the inscription. It read: **"To Grandma, with compliments of the author."**

Unaware of what he had written, he spoke a truth about the uniqueness of the Bible, which has come to us from its author, God.

Our primary text is from **II Timothy 3:16** focusing on the first part of the verse: **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."** Your translation may read **"All Scripture is God-breathed."** We will also look at **II Peter 1:20-21**. Both passages are fundamental to the doctrine of inspiration.

Last week as we began our series on the importance of God's Word, we considered that the Bible is inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts.

Inerrant means the Bible is without error.

Infallible means the Bible is incapable of error.

Both these doctrines stand or fall on the doctrine of inspiration, that God is the author of the Bible.

Let's consider what inspiration is not by looking first at the myths about inspiration.

I. THE MYTHS ABOUT INSPIRATION

By myths I mean other views about the Bible's inspiration. First is natural inspiration.

A. Natural Inspiration

We have at home a collection of LP's and CD's by artists such as Nat King Cole, Mitch Miller, Bach and Mozart among others.

We have books that include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, Christian and secular.

We don't own but have been to museums where there are displayed many great works of art by Rembrandt, Michelangelo, and Van Gogh.

People will often refer to great artists and authors as being inspired to create these masterpieces.

Inspiration here would refer to some external influence that spurred creative thought or action. It could be observing a sunset or watching waves beat against the shore or seeing children at play. The backdrop of an old town can inspire a western. The song of two swans talking to each other or listening to the mournful sound of a loon swimming across a lake can inspire the creation of a symphony. Different experiences inspire them in some way to write or draw.

When it comes to the Bible, the natural inspiration view denies any supernatural element in biblical inspiration. Those who hold to this view believe that the writers of the Bible had special mental or spiritual genius who **"possessed rare spiritual insight into moral and spiritual truths. Through their exceptional abilities, they wrote books of the Bible much in the same way as any individual might write a book" or "as poets write literature,"** states Czeslaw Bassara.

Inspired by an idea they wrote about it by their own will. This view flies in the face of **II Peter 1:20-21 "no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man."**

B. Mystical Illumination

Charles Ryrie writes that this view goes a step further than natural inspiration. It views the authors as more than just natural geniuses in that they were also Spirit-filled and guided. It also believes that the books of the Bible were not written any differently than other great Christian literature written during the fifth century to our present day and are believed to be as inspired as the Books of the Bible. They might include the works of Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Watchmen Nee, Charles Spurgeon, Henry Ironside or Charles Stanley. If that is the

case, then this view assumes that the books of the Bible are not infallible and contain error. Those who believe this view believe that these writings may contain messages from God.

This view holds then that it is the writer who is inspired and not the writings. Our main verse refutes that notion because it emphatically declares that it is Scripture which is inspired by God and not man. It is a noteworthy distinction then to say that all authors are inspired by God vs. all Scripture.

C. Degree Inspiration

This view simply means that while all the Bible is inspired, some passages are more inspired than others. For example, the books of history may not be as inspired as the books of poetry or the law.

How would the reader know what is more inspired?

It may be true that some books or sections are more relevant to us today than other parts, but all of the Bible is equally inspired.

D. Partial Inspiration

This view holds that some parts of the Bible are inspired while other parts are not. The uninspired parts merely tell stories and fill in gaps between what is inspired. The parts about salvation and faith are inspired but passages like history or science are not inspired and may even contain error where the inspired parts do not. This view teaches that we can trust the Bible when it comes to spiritual issues, but we can't trust it when it talks about other matters.

Again, how do you know what parts of the Bible to believe? Is any of the Bible reliable? Who gets to decide what is spiritual and inspired and what is not?

We believe that **“all Scripture is profitable.”**

E. Conceptual Inspiration

It might be a stretch for some of you, but how many of you remember from your school days when you had to write a theme paper? The teacher gave you an assignment and you had to write a paper.

What you did last summer

Your favorite President

Write about a tree

The conceptual inspiration view believes that the idea of the author was inspired but not his exact words. God gave them an idea and they wrote.

Moses, write about creation.

Moses, write about the history of Israel.

Moses, write about leprosy.

Moses, write about sacrifices and festivals.

David, write about fear and trust.

Solomon, write about money management, anger, working hard, choosing good friends.

Paul, write about grace, faith, and love.

John, write about Jesus's life and end times.

If only the idea is inspired, can any of it be trusted?

F. Divine Dictation

Picture a boss in a big corporation sitting behind his desk. He flips a switch on a call box and tells his secretary to come in with her memo pad. She enters and sits across from him peeling back the cover of her pad. With pen in hand she gets ready to write down everything the boss says word for word.

That's the idea behind this view. God summoned each author who then wrote every word that God spoke. Yes, there are some parts where God asked the author to take down what He said. For example: **Exodus 20:1 “Then God spoke all these words.”** But He did not put them in a trance or make them write word for word what He wanted them to write. If He did, every part of the Bible would have the same style, vocabulary and structure.

G. Neo-Orthodoxy Theory

This view is dangerous. It believes that the Bible is not the actual Word of God but only becomes so when you have a special encounter with God through some experience. What is recorded in the Bible is not important. For example, they believe that it's not important whether Jesus actually rose from the dead. The important thing is what you experience when God speaks to you. The wind blows rustling the leaves and you think its God.

What Paul writes in **I Corinthians 15** about the importance of the resurrection is compelling enough reason to believe the resurrection was a factual event and it is crucial to our faith. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, we are still in sin and forever condemned to eternity separated from God.

Does inspiration matter?

Does it matter that all Scripture is God-breathed?

We have considered thy myths about inspiration. Let's consider the meaning of inspiration.

II. THE MEANING OF INSPIRATION – II Timothy 3:16

Now I want you to notice an important distinction. Most translations similarly state that **“All Scripture is inspired by God”** or **“All Scripture is God-breathed.”**

Some translations like the World English Bible say it this way: **“Every writing inspired by God is profitable.”** Another way it has been translated is **“All Scripture inspired by God is profitable.”**

This translation leaves out the source of Scripture making the claim that not all Scripture is inspired, only some of it is inspired and only what is inspired is profitable. The correct translation is as it appears in our text leaving no question that the source of inspiration is God and that ALL Scripture is inspired not just some of it.

The word inspired literally means as it appears in the NIV, God-breathed.

Think of it this way: without breath, there would be no air that would pass through the vocal chords allowing it to do its thing in making sound turn into words that come out our mouth as we speak. Without breath it would be nothing more than a silent movie. Lips would be moving, but you would hear nothing, just silence.

I knew a pastor who was born deaf, but his mother taught him to speak by placing a balloon under her chin and speaking. He could see her lips move and feel the vibrations of her voice through the balloon. He would then mimic the sound learning to speak.

While this is the only time this word is used in the Bible, the idea of the breath of God and its importance to inspiration is evident in other verses. **Genesis 2:7** tells us that God breathed into Adam the breath of life.

John 20:22 says that Jesus breathed on the disciples so that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God came directly from God as He breathed it out so when we speak about the inspiration of the Bible, we are referring to the fact that God directly and divinely influenced the writers of Scripture by breathing into them His Word. It wasn't some mysterious experience. It wasn't last night's chili burrito. It was not from nature.

The Bible is unique from all other books, including all other religious books in that it is truly the Word of God. It is God speaking to man about Himself and about His plan through history to redeem man so that man can once again enjoy a personal relationship with Him through faith in the finished work of Christ.

Jim McCotter writes “All Scripture is God-breathed and He doesn't waste His breath.”

This takes us to the method of inspiration.

III. THE METHOD OF INSPIRATION – Hebrews 1:1-2

Throughout the Bible we see evidence of God speaking to man and God speaking through man. He spoke first in creation as we see in **Genesis 1**. God spoke and what He said came into existence just as He wanted.

In a conversation within the Trinity – Father, Son and Spirit, He spoke of creating man in His own image.

He spoke to Adam giving him commands to keep: tending the garden, populating the earth and forbidding the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When that command was disobeyed, He spoke to man about the curse and consequences for his disobedience.

He spoke at different times to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in different ways to them like through the pre-incarnate Christ, dreams and visions. He spoke to Moses through a burning bush and then directly on the mountain, but to the Israelites below, it sounded like a great thunderous noise. He spoke in written form by giving the Israelites 10 commandments etched on stone. He spoke to Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, Hosea and Daniel and then He spoke through Jesus, the Word who became flesh.

According to **Hebrews 1**, God has spoken. He is not some distant and detached landowner who set things in motion and then just walked away. We have a record of Him interacting with mankind by speaking and then when the canon of Scripture was completed, He has spoken to us through His Word. Every word in the Bible is the Word of God. Every word of the Bible is inspired by Him for our benefit. Every word is God-breathed.

So when we discuss the method of inspiration, we must understand what it means.

B.B. Warfield writes “Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writings by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.”

Edward Young says “Inspiration is a superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess Divine authority and trustworthiness and, possessing such Divine authority and trustworthiness, are free from error.”

Charles Ryrie’s definition says: “God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their own writings.”

The word inspire speaks of breathing into something, but the word used in our text speaks of God breathing out something. What He breathed out was the Scriptures.

What we understand from these different definitions

is simply that when it came to the writing of the Bible both God and man were involved. However, we need to make it clear that God is the Source even though man’s will was involved. The different definitions state that God superintended or oversaw or controlled their writings in such a way that while they wrote what He wanted them to say, they said it using their own style, their own abilities, their own personalities. In so doing what they wrote was guarded by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed to be accurate and without error.

If Scripture had been dictated by God to each author, every book, every sentence would all be in the same style. But as it is we have books written by shepherds and fishermen, and men educated in the finest schools. They were learned and unlearned.

Now before I move on, let me make one additional important distinction. As it is with inerrancy and infallibility, so it is with inspiration. They refer to the original manuscripts not to translations. As accurate as they try to be, no translation is inspired. There isn’t one version of the Bible that is more inspired than another. Unlike the original authors, the translators were not inspired by God. Let me again make it clear that the authors were not inspired, the words of Scripture are what’s inspired.

The message conveyed in **II Timothy 3:16** is that ALL Scripture is God-breathed. His Word is what is inspired not the authors.

The other passage that conveys that truth is found in **II Peter 1:20-21**.

One view teaches that no prophecy is to be privately or independently interpreted but must include the Holy Spirit, Scripture and the church.

The other view is that no prophecy came about by the prophet himself or better yet, no prophecy originated with man. It didn’t come from his own thinking or will but rather it was by the Holy Spirit who moved the author along.

From both this passage and **II Timothy 3:16**, it’s important to note that in the writing of Scripture, both God and man had an active role. As one author

notes: “God was the source of the content of Scripture, so that what it says is what God has said. But the human author also actively spoke; he was more than a recorder. Yet what he said came from God. Although actively speaking, he was carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The word for being carried along was used in how a ship was moved along the water by the wind.

Growing up at Camp we had a couple of small sailboats. On occasion I would take one out for a little fun on the lake. Most of the time there was sufficient enough wind to fill the sail and move me around the lake. But there were times when the wind would die down and the boat would just sit there because there was no wind to move the boat. I may be a big windbag, but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't blow enough wind into the sail to move the boat.

As a fisherman, Peter understood the need for wind to move his fishing boat. It's a perfect illustration of what it means to be carried along by the Holy Spirit in writing Scripture. The human authors couldn't generate the words of Scripture on their own, they needed the Holy Spirit to do that. The human will couldn't produce Scripture. It didn't originate from the human author. This passage says that the human authors were led or moved by the Spirit.

The word prophecy is not referring to something that is yet future, but instead refers to speaking forth or proclaiming something that is spoken. It has to do with revelation in the sense of what God says. In that regard it speaks about the source of Scripture being the Holy Spirit who worked through men to write the Bible in their own individual, distinct personalities, dialects, vocabularies and thought patterns as the Holy Spirit breathed life into what they wrote.

John Phillips writes that the Bible “is not the product of human thoughts, genius, cleverness, or study. On the contrary, the essential for which God looked in a life was not brilliance, imagination, or inventiveness, but holiness. God chose men of holy lives to be the channels through whom He

proclaimed His Word.”

The authors were ordinary men, who, for the most part, walked with God. Jonah, even though he was a prophet, might be an exception, because initially he didn't want to obey God and even when he did, he didn't like the results. Every author had their moments of weakness, but God still used them.

John MacArthur puts it this way: “It was as if the writers of Scripture raised their spiritual sails and allowed the Spirit to fill them with His powerful breath of revelation as they penned its divine words.”

If man is somehow the author, then his writings could be brought into question and could also be subject to revision. It would not therefore be either authoritative or without error and is certainly not inspired. That's why when we consider the scope or measure of inspiration it is seen in a singular word that is all encompassing.

IV. THE MEASURE OF INSPIRATION

The measure of Scripture's inspiration is seen in that three-letter word ALL, which is pregnant with meaning. As I noted earlier, it's not some of it. It's not some of it more than others. That word means what it says. All Scripture is equally inspired. This shows us then the magnitude of Scripture.

V. THE MAGNITUDE OF SCRIPTURE

II Timothy 3:16 looks at the scope of the impact the Word of God can have on us.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable.”

Psalms 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

All of Scripture has value as it guides our steps and guards our path. But that is the topic we will pick up after Easter as we look more closely at the importance at the importance of Scripture to our daily lives.