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Inspiration 2 Timothy 3:1-17

Our constitution is the ultimate “law of the land”. In that document is the authority by which we are governed. It is the final word on what the government can and cannot do. Its authority is derived from assent of the people to be governed by the principles found in its pages. There was a majority vote that determined we would be governed by this amazing document. Certainly, there is a great deal of respect and admiration for the writers of our constitution. We marvel at their wisdom in the form of government they devised and the way it has worked in our country down through the years.

We have claimed the Word of God is the “Constitution” for our lives, the final authority for our faith and practice. Its authority, however, is not derived from the acclamation of its readers or by a majority vote. The Bible’s authority comes from the fact that it is indeed the very “words” of God. We find the proclamation of this great truth in Paul’s statement to Timothy, **“...All Scripture is given by inspiration of God”**. We must stop and consider all that this grand statement means for us.

How can a book written by 40 different authors, over a period of 1,500 years (the latest being over 2,000 years ago) be authoritative and relevant to us today? As Paul writes to Timothy and encourages him to continue in and depend upon the scriptures to help him fulfill his task as a young pastor, he writes a grand statement regarding the supernatural origin and nature of God’s Word:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...

(2 Timothy 3:16)

The Meaning of Inspiration

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” The word “inspiration” is essential to understanding the divine origin and nature of the Bible. It is a compound word in the original Greek, “theopneustos”, meaning literally, “God-breathed”. (*Theos*, ‘God’; and *Pneo*, ‘to breathe’). It is an unusual word used only here in the New Testament. Paul is stating that the words we have recorded in Scripture are the very words “breathed out” by God Himself! Another key passage helps us understand more about inspiration:

...Knowing this first, which no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

Here, “interpretation” is a word actually referring more to the origin of scripture, rather than to the process of interpreting or understanding it. “Prophecy” speaks of the “forth telling” of God’s Word as well as the “fore telling” (prediction of future events). Peter explains that the source of God’s Word was when **“holy men...spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”**. “Moved” is to be borne or carried. It was used of those riding in a ship, borne or carried along by the force of the wind. It is the illustration of the wind filling the sail and moving the boat across the water. Pastor James MacDonald explained it this way: **“In the same sense,**

God breathed the words of Scripture into the human authors. Yes, there were men who wrote it down. But the words that were written were the very words of God. God breathed or blew His words into the hearts and minds of the human “sails”. The end result is that what we have recorded in the Bible are the very words of God.”¹

Inspiration is the act and the process by which God has given us His words in written form. It is *“God’s superintendence (oversight) of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original writings”*.²

What Inspiration Does Not Mean

Inspiration does not simply refer to the great achievement of human writers. The writers of scripture were not simply “inspired” like a great author or composer. They did not simply create a work of high ethics and morals with great insights into human nature. This asserts that God did not write the book – men did.

Inspiration does not mean only the truths, ideas, or concepts were inspired. Some claim that God inspired the thoughts, or the concepts found in scripture, but not the very words themselves. This opens the door for a book containing errors and mistakes, falling under man’s evaluation of what is or is not inspired.

Inspiration is not the act of God upon a person as he reads the Bible. Some say the Word of God is simply a human book, which certainly contains errors and mistakes as any other human work might. They claim God can take that work, however, and “inspire” it as He applies it to our lives. Again, the truth of scripture is determined by the impressions or opinions of the people who read it.

Inspiration is not “mechanical dictation”. God did not simply dictate word for word and the human authors

merely record what God told them to write. He sovereignly used their backgrounds and personalities to write His Word to us.

What Inspiration Does Mean

It is vital to note that it is the writings, not the writers that are inspired. If the Bible we hold in our hands is in fact the inspired Word of God, what does that mean? It means the Scripture is **infallible**, it speaks the truth. It means it is **inerrant** in its original writings, it makes no mistakes. God's Word is **complete** and **sufficient**, giving us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The word of God is **powerful** and **effective**. We shall see in future studies how God's Word is "profitable" or "useful" to change our lives. And, finally, perhaps most relevant here in the Capitol, God's Word is **authoritative**. It has the very authority of God Himself as He reveals to us in His Word the way of salvation and the way to live a life pleasing to Him. Our federal and state constitutions have authority because we as a people have chosen or voted to make it the law of the land. The Word of God has authority because it is indeed the very words of the God and creator of the universe! This would certainly have impact on many aspects of life and service in the Capitol. More importantly, it is the authoritative word on how one comes to God and how one lives their life. It is the final authority on what to believe and how to live!

Extent of Inspiration

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God... What does Paul mean when he says, "**All scripture** is given by inspiration"? He was certainly speaking of the **Old Testament Scriptures**. It was to these he referred when he wrote of the "**Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation**" (2 Tim 3:15). Almost countless times throughout the Old Testament we read "**It is written**", "**God spoke**", "**the word of the Lord came to me**" or some similar statement. Paul's claim also carries over to the **New Testament writings** as well. The New Testament was penned by Jesus' apostles or by ones closely associated with the apostles. These men were given authority by Christ Himself to preach His word and establish the church. The church was built upon the foundation of these men and their teaching (Ephesians 2:20). The apostle's teaching and by extension their writings were recognized to be authoritative, literally, the Words of God to the churches. (2 Peter 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:18; 1 Cor 2:10-16; 1 Cor 14:36-37; 2 Thes 2:15) Paul spoke of this most clearly in 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

When Paul says, "**all scripture is given by inspiration of God**", he is teaching that the written scriptures we have in the Old and New Testaments are indeed the very words of God Himself! Inspiration dictates that if the Bible is the very Word of God, then it is without error. Inspiration also pertains to the very words of Scripture and to each and every part of Scripture. Jesus Himself said "**the Scripture cannot be broken**" (John 10:35). He also proclaimed "**...Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means**

pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." "Jot" and "tittle" refer to the smallest letter and the smallest stroke on a letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus boldly taught that the Word of God, down to the very letter would be fulfilled.

Result of Inspiration

The result of inspiration is that the Bible we hold in our hands is the very Word of God. If this is true then:

The Bible has authority over our lives. God is our creator and has revealed Himself and His ways to us in His word.

The Bible is a book in which we can trust and believe. This is how Pastor Voddie Baucham describes it:

"I choose to believe the Bible because it is a reliable collection of historical documents, written by eye witnesses during the lifetime of other eye witnesses. They report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophesies and claim that their writings are divine rather than human in origin."³

We should love, read, and study the Bible and seek to apply it to our lives. We join with Psalmist in saying:

Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.
Psalm 119: 97

Long ago the great Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards summed it up well:

"You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scripture; labor to understand as much of what He says as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore, let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with...divine truth...you accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold."

¹MacDonald, J. 2002. *God Wrote a Book* p. 43. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

²Ryrie, C.C. *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*. Chicago, Ill. Moody Press.

³Baucham, Voddie. *Why I Choose to Believe the Bible*. www.youtube.com.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, November 1

12:00 McManus Conference Room

(# M252 Located near House Minority Offices)